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ABSTRACT

This book focuses on the essential elements of leading effective groups in group counseling. Chapter 1 concentrates on the rationale behind using groups and their myths, advantages, and limitations. Chapter 2 discusses different types of groups, especially those that are therapeutic and task-oriented, and their theory and ethics. Chapter 3 delves into the qualities of group leadership; it covers the personal and professional characteristics that effective group leaders possess. Chapter 4 concentrates on the initial preplanning work of setting up any group, covering screening and selecting members and group composition. Chapter 5 explores issues that must be dealt with during a group's first few sessions, including a review of confidentiality. Chapter 6 focuses on the dynamics of transition, a stage often characterized by conflict; positive ways of handling friction as well as exercises that can be helpful in resolving conflict are discussed. Chapter 7 addresses the working stage of groups and presents techniques to aid the productive achievement of individual and collective goals. Effective ways to terminate groups and the importance of wrapping the group up properly are discussed in chapter 8. Creative group exercises and their uses and abuses are examined in chapter 9, which describes proven ways of assisting groups in the beginning, middle, and end of their life cycles. Chapter 10 looks briefly into the future of groups and probable uses of groups in the years to come. (NB)

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Effective Group Counseling

Samuel T. Gladding

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Effective Group Counseling

Samuel T. Gladding

ERIC Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse
School of Education
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina 27412-5001

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ERIC Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse
School of Education
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina 27412-5001

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Celebration

ERIC/CASS — 1993
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This, the sixth volume in the crème de la crème series, introduces the first publication of the new ERIC Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse—ERIC/CASS. After twenty-seven rewarding and productive years at the University of Michigan, we accepted an invitation to join the School of Education at the University of North Carolina—Greensboro. We expect our many rewarding connections at Michigan to continue and complement the bountiful resources available to us at UNCG.

The new thrusts of ERIC/CASS will be nourished by a dynamic collaboration between staff and programs at the two institutions. We will always cherish our years at Michigan but we look forward with excitement to the start of a new clearinghouse at UNCG.

It is noteworthy that Dr. Sam Gladding, the author of this first ERIC/CASS publication at UNCG, earned his Ph.D. at UNCG and was a co-author with Barbara Okun of an ERIC/CAPS publication on *Issues in Training Marriage and Family Therapists* a decade ago. Though the timing was unplanned, we believe it is especially fitting that someone whose professional roots are with UNCG and who is an emerging national leader in counseling should author our first UNCG-hosted publication.

Dedication

To Wesley D. Hood
who first taught me about groups
and whose positive lessons
have continued to play an important part in my life.

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Introduction

Almost without exception, contemporary reviews on the status and effectiveness of counseling express the need to give higher priority to the group process and group counseling in both the preparation of counselors and in counseling programs at all levels and settings. Buttressed by hard research that provides compelling data on the desirable outcomes of group counseling and the obvious cost-effective advantages of group over individual counseling, there is widespread agreement on the need for an increased emphasis on group counseling. However compelling the case for the extended use of group counseling may be, its use in counseling services in most settings is still far less than it could be. Why, you may ask, if the need is so great and its effectiveness so apparent, has its use been so limited? The reason, I believe, is most attributable to the inadequate preparation of counselors in either pre- or post-service programs to cope with the demands and challenge inherent in being an effective group counselor.

Group counseling is a very effective counseling tool. But it also requires a knowledgeable and skillful leader if the inherent potential in the use of group process is to be fully realized. As is true of many powerful tools, in the hands of a novice it may produce disappointing or limited results. After all, even the most expensive Nikon camera may actually produce inferior pictures in the hands of rank amateurs over what they could achieve with a foolproof "point and shoot" camera.

The importance and the need for better group counseling and the never-ending swell of requests for a good resource on group counseling led us to see if we couldn't add another volume to the crème de la crème series that focused specifically on group counseling. The emphasis in the series on having both a strong conceptual foundation and rigorous field testing of practices and procedures led us to believe that the time was ripe for a book on group counseling to join the other distinguished publications. The challenge, of course, was to identify the person who could author a book that was both highly substantive and engagingly practical. We did not have to look long to find the person we needed. Dr. Sam Gladding met all of our criteria and then some. Conceptually solid ideas, vigorously practical content, and a succinct and cogent style are what we typically bargain for. In Sam Gladding, however, we got all of that plus an imaginative, creative, immensely interesting and if you will, a poet to boot. Not too bad a list of assets for one writer and one book!

Most important of all is that the outcome of Sam Gladding's writing is exactly what we had hoped for but really didn't think it was possible. His monograph is substantive yet practical; is driven by research findings but also by the accumulated knowledge of experienced group specialists, and it is a book that will contribute to the understanding of group process for the most experienced of counselors, yet is fully understandable and of high utility to those new to group work.

We have said enough. We leave to you the process of discovering and experiencing through your own senses the real pleasure this monograph will bring to you. Enjoy and profit.

Garry R. Walz, Ph.D.
Director

About the Author

Samuel T. Gladding is professor of counselor education and assistant to the president of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His leadership in the field of counseling includes service as editor of the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, president of Chi Sigma Iota (counseling honor society international), president of the Association for Specialists in Group Work, president of the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and vice president of the Association for Humanistic Education and Development. He is the author of numerous publications including three recent books: *Counseling: A Comprehensive Profession* (1992), *Counseling as an Art: The Creative Arts in Counseling* (1992), and *Group Work: A Counseling Specialty* (1991).

Dr. Gladding's previous academic appointments have been at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Fairfield University (Connecticut), and Rockingham Community College (Wentworth, North Carolina). He was also Director of Children's Services at the Rockingham County (North Carolina) Mental Health Center. Gladding received his degrees from Wake Forest (B.A., M.A. Ed.), Yale (M.A.), and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro (Ph.D.). He is a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC). He is a former member of the Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling.

Dr. Gladding is married to the former Claire Tillson and is the father of three children—Benjamin, Nathaniel, and Timothy. Outside of counseling, he enjoys swimming, tennis, jogging, and humor.

Preface

Groups are a vital and important means of helping people reach personal and professional goals. Throughout human history individuals and nations have achieved success through working in groups. The effectiveness of groups, however, has been uneven and so groups are as much loathed as they are loved. Today, there is research and practice that can guide practitioners on all levels on how to run groups in an efficient, practical, and ethical manner. This book focuses on the essential elements of leading effective groups.

The first chapter concentrates on the rationale behind using groups and their myths, advantages, and limitations. Chapter 2 discusses different types of groups, especially those that are therapeutic and task-oriented, and their theory and ethics. Chapter 3 delves into the qualities of group leadership; it covers the personal and professional characteristics that effective group leaders possess.

The next few chapters shift toward an examination of critical issues in the development of groups, and the tasks that leaders and group members must accomplish at different stages are highlighted. The initial preplanning work of setting up any group is discussed in Chapter 4, which covers screening and selecting members and group composition. Chapter 5 explores the issues that must be dealt with during a group's first few sessions, including a review of confidentiality.

Chapter 6 focuses on the dynamics of transition, a stage often characterized by conflict; positive ways of handling friction are discussed and exercises that can be helpful in resolving conflict are discussed. Chapter 7 addresses the working stage of groups and presents techniques to aid the productive achievement of individual and collective goals. Effective ways to terminate groups and the importance of wrapping the group up properly are discussed in Chapter 8.

Creative group exercises and their uses and abuses are examined in Chapter 9, which describes proven ways of assisting groups in the beginning, middle, and end of their life cycles. Chapter 10 looks briefly into the future of groups and probable uses of groups in the years to come.

The impetus for writing this book has come from many sources. One has been my continued interest in groups over the years, starting with my birth family. My parents were always involved in groups, and I learned to value group work early in my development. As a leader of groups, as counselor, as college professor, and past editor of the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, I have found too few user-friendly books on the subject. This background, combined with an invitation by Dr. Garry Walz of ERIC/CAPS to put my ideas to paper and a challenge by Dr. John Anderson of my university to lead a quality improvement group, led me to write this text. By simultaneously writing about and leading a group, I have been able to field test my ideas through actual experience. I am indebted to both Garry and John for pushing me to write this work. I am also grateful to the quality improvement team members of Wake Forest University for their ideas and suggestions.

In closing, I would like to reiterate what I have said elsewhere about the importance of support for writing. Writing is never a one-person project. I have had the continuous support of my wife, Claire, and our sons, Benjamin, Nathaniel, and Timothy, and their support has been of immense help to me while completing this text. Their understanding, patience, and love have made the completion of this manuscript possible, and I am deeply grateful to them. I am also indebted to Dr. Wesley D. Hood, who taught me well during my initial group course in graduate school. The lessons I learned from him continue to bear fruit. Indeed, this project has been one involving groups on many different levels over time.

As you read this work you, I hope you will find a useful blending of the best of old and new ideas on conducting effective groups. This text is meant to be easy to read, yet scholarly and practical. If you find material here that benefits your understanding and leadership of groups, I will have accomplished what I set out to do. More important, however, you will have profited.

Samuel T. Gladding
Wake Forest University

Chapter 1

A Rationale for Working in Groups

"Why am I here amid those assembled
and what am I looking for in their presence?"
Inside I think I know the answers
but for the moment,
in the face of newness,
I quietly ponder the question.

—Gladding, 1993

There are many ways to achieve goals. One can choose to live or work in solitude and thereby have opportunity to become at peace with nature and oneself and to contemplate life (Nouwen, 1974). Or one can choose to live in more crowded circumstances and, through frequent interactions with others, revitalize one's energy, purpose, and focus (Forsyth, 1990). Styles of life influence the attainment of personal and professional objectives. The ways in which people choose to work and play have long-lasting impacts, for instance, on whether they choose to marry or on their mental health (Super, 1957). Activities have a strong, systematic, and continuous effect on persons through feedback and interaction loops (Von Bertalanffy, 1968).

Many personal and professional objectives are best attained through groups, or by working with groups.

Many personal and professional objectives are best attained through groups, or by working with groups. Groups—from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) through study cells—help people accomplish tasks that are too big for them to do alone. The process of group interaction helps make people more effective in helping themselves and others resolve problems (Zimpfer, 1984). In fact, groups are so valuable that in some cultures people simply prefer "to do things in groups" and appreciate the power of groups (Zander, 1985, p. 37).

In this chapter, we will explore myths associated with groups, reasons for using groups, and benefits and limitations of groups.

The process of group interaction helps make people more effective in helping themselves and others resolve problems

Why Use Groups?

Among helping professionals, especially those in counseling, the word "why" is usually avoided. This query puts people on the defensive and seldom leads to new or insightful responses (Benjamin, 1981). Many people do things out of unconscious motives without a clear idea as to why they are behaving in such a manner.

The question "why" is one that *can* be answered, however, in regard to the formation of groups. People are gregarious. They live, work, and play together. Groups are a part of almost everyone's life on a daily basis in educational, business, and recreational environments.

In addition to having a natural tendency to form groups, most people find groups beneficial. It is through groups that individuals are helped to connect and interact with others in generative and productive ways (McClure, 1990). Within healthy groups, trust, altruism, peace, and synergy are fostered. In all probability people would not survive, let alone thrive, without relying on groups. This interdependence is seen in everything from support groups for the widowed (Folken, 1991) and those in grief (Zimpfer, 1991) to groups for midlife career change (Zimpfer, 1989) and for students with low motivation (Campbell & Myrick, 1990).

It is through groups that individuals are helped to connect and interact with others in generative and productive ways.

Myths and Misconceptions about Groups

The power of groups is often exaggerated, and, as a result, people are sometimes awed of or frightened by them. When individuals enter groups with fear there is little that can be accomplished for or by them until they acknowledge and talk about their concerns (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993). Therefore, group workers in all settings must be ready to deal with myths and misconceptions in order to help those with whom they interact. "Myths and fears are a part of the legacy with which all group leaders, regardless of their theoretical orientation, must contend" (Kottler, 1983, p. 106).

"Myths and fears are a part of the legacy with which all group leaders, regardless of their theoretical orientation, must contend."

With realistic expectations, the likelihood of people having a positive experience in groups is enhanced. Effective leaders must learn to deal with some common myths about groups:

Myth 1: *"The effectiveness of groups depends on leadership."* While leadership is an important element in almost all groups, the effectiveness of a group is a combination of many factors. In summarizing the research, Capuzzi and Gross (1992) state that group members have an impact on each other regardless of the leader, and "the most effective group leaders are those who help the group develop so that members are primary sources of help for one another" (p. 18). While it is helpful and advantageous to have a caring, committed, and competent leader for a group, it is not essential.

"...effective group leaders are those who help the group develop so that members are primary sources of help for one another."

Myth 2: *"Groups are only effective when they focus on the present."* It is beneficial for many people to attend to their thoughts, behaviors, and feelings as they occur in a group setting. However, the effectiveness of the group and its members is also a product of the past. Therefore, effective groups deal with "there-and-then experiences as well as the here-and-now" (Capuzzi & Gross, 1992, p. 19). In this integrated way, members inform themselves and

...effective groups deal with "there-and-then experiences as well as the here-and-now."

others about lessons learned from personal history as well as those gleaned from the present.

Complete openness and honesty are not appropriate in every situation.

Myth 3: *"Group members must be open and honest at all times."* This myth implies that people in groups should "tell all" and confess all of their shameful acts to others (Yalom, 1985). It is a major reason many people resist joining groups of any type. Complete openness and honesty are not appropriate in every situation. For instance, if a group member has a history of failures or does not like someone else's speech, the communication of these facts will probably not be helpful to others. Unfiltered self-disclosing or feedback per se may do more damage than good (Martin & Jacobs, 1980). However, a sense of trust within the group may be established or enhanced when group members are open and honest with each other on a selective and constructive basis. As a general principle, such behaviors are valued and appropriate.

Myth 4: *"Groups force people to lose their identity."* The idea behind this myth is that a group is overwhelming and that within such a setting individuality is lost (Yalom, 1985). Part of this misconception is related to stories of poorly run or unregulated groups where people have been attacked, ridiculed, or humiliated when they did not agree with the group as a whole or with its leader. Stories of brainwashing experiences from prisoners of war have also fed the idea that groups are not helpful to individuals. A third factor that has led to this myth is the behaviors of large and anonymous groups, such as mobs (Zimbardo, 1969). In reality, most individuals develop a stronger personal identity or interests as a result of their interactions with others.

...most individuals develop a stronger personal identity or interests as a result of their interactions with others.

Myth 5: *"Groups are artificial."* This belief is precipitated by the fact that all group experiences are unique. As a result, many people doubt that what they learn in a group setting can be transferred to other life events. This belief may be less prevalent among task groups because key members of a work team may actually be present in the group. In therapeutic groups, however, members may question the validity of their group experience more because of their diverse backgrounds. In actuality, any experience in which one learns more about oneself and how to interrelate effectively with others has a lasting and realistically pervasive influence.

...any experience in which one learns more about oneself and how to interrelate effectively with others has a lasting and realistically pervasive influence.

Overcoming Myths and Misconceptions

There are a number of strategies leaders can use to dispel and overcome myths and misconceptions about groups (Childers & Couch, 1989). Among these are the following:

- Utilizing a pregroup interview to identify any fears related to the group and to correct them.
- Providing factual information (psychodidactics) to group members about the effects of groups (Selby & Calhoun, 1980).
- Addressing group members' concerns early in the group process by giving the group as a whole low-intensity responses that address current thoughts and feelings (Cohen & Smith, 1976).

For example, a group leader might make the following statement at the beginning of the second group session:

> It seems to me that many of us have concerns and doubts related to the group that we may not be ready to publically verbalize at this time but which may inhibit our full participation in the group. For example, we might think that if we do not agree with someone else in the group that members will gang up on us and force us to acquiesce. Therefore, I would like for each of you to take a few minutes to write down on a slip of paper any fears or negative thoughts you have about the

group right now, and then to pass the slips of paper to me unsigned. I will then read out concerns that we have as group members. If you would like to make a comment about what I read as it may relate to you, we will then talk about what is being expressed. Please only do what you are comfortable doing. When the exercise is over, I will throw the slips of paper away.

Benefits of Groups

Groups provide a major way to help people master the important interpersonal tasks in their lives.

There are many benefits to being in groups besides companionship and survival. People who join groups will have both unique and universal perspectives on what they gain from their experience.

One of the first benefits of participating in groups involves accomplishing life-skill tasks and goals. Most people are capable of accomplishing much on their own, but new skills can be achieved more efficiently and effectively with the help of others. Groups provide a major way to help people master the important interpersonal tasks in their lives (Gazda, 1989). For example, an individual could learn how to socialize through trial and error; but this same skill can be accomplished faster and more effectively if it is learned in a group setting. Classes in everything from etiquette to archery are usually conducted in a group format. The learning of life skills is vital to human health and happiness, and groups can help people learn and practice crucial new skills and behaviors in a safe environment before they try them in public.

The learning of life skills is vital to human health and happiness, and groups can help people learn and practice crucial new skills and behaviors in a safe environment....

Another benefit of groups, especially in work environments, is that they give individuals a voice in defining jobs, processes, and changes. Groups promote cohesiveness and teams. It is usually "easier to change individuals formed into groups than to change any of them separately" (Lewin, 1951, p. 228). Organized groups by their very nature foster more uniform change and growth and so help foster greater acceptance of decisions. Work groups can help promote the broader use of new ideas and enable employees and employers to invest more efficiently in the products and services they provide (Evans & Lindsay, 1989). The result is the creation of an atmosphere where there is high morale and maximum productivity.

The power of peers within groups keeps people focused on issues they need to resolve.

Groups can also be utilized effectively in therapeutic settings. Individual counseling can be helpful but some people find group counseling to be equally, if not more, beneficial (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988). For instance, addicts are infamous for manipulating others, including counselors. In group settings, especially in counseling groups for addicts, there is less likelihood of evasiveness and greater probability of dealing with real issues (Clark, Blanchard, & Hawes, 1992). The power of peers within groups keeps people focused on issues they need to resolve. Groups are one way to help people resolve difficulties and come to some kind of remediation.

...groups provide a way for some people to survive or adapt in the midst of adversity.

A fourth advantage of groups is that they promote social connectedness. Individuals who feel alone, lonely, cut off, or despondent, such as women who are survivors of childhood sexual victimization, are likely to have mental health problems (Apolinsky & Wilcoxon, 1991). Groups help people know that others care; they enhance one's feelings about belonging and directly or indirectly enhance feelings about the meaning and purpose of life. Groups also provide support during times of social transition and growth (Waldo, 1987). Thus, groups provide a way for some people to survive or adapt in the midst of adversity. They foster cohesiveness, understanding, community, and self-esteem.

A fifth favorable reason for working in groups is that they allow members to express and work through situations that have been left unresolved in their families (Yalom, 1985). By reenacting experiences of one's primary family group, individuals are freed, on both conscious and unconscious levels, to move on with their lives and plan for the future. A related benefit is that group members come to realize the universal nature of some situations as well as the uniqueness of their own lives. For instance, in the group process known as "family reconstruction" developed by Virginia Satir (Satir, Bitter, & Krestensen, 1988), members are able to work out unresolved fear, anger, and other negative feelings by letting group members enact past family history events.

By reenacting experiences of one's primary family group, individuals are freed, on both conscious and unconscious levels, to move on with their lives and plan for the future.

A final aspect of groups that is helpful is the sense of altruism they foster (Yalom, 1985). Altruism is offering help to others unselfishly and without expecting help in return. The pleasant irony is that group members who give of themselves in this way also experience change; they begin to see themselves as helpers who are productive. The focus of their energy changes in the process from seeing themselves in need of help to being helpers. This type of evolution is especially prominent in self-help groups (Gladding, 1991).

Limitations of Groups

Although there are many advantages to working in groups, there are realistic limitations as well. These drawbacks need to be considered in deciding whether a person should participate in a group experience.

One of the first limitations of groups is that not everyone benefits from being in a group. Individuals who are painfully withdrawn, for example, may get little from group experiences until or unless they receive other types of treatment. Likewise, some people who are creative by themselves may find their ideas being resisted or put down within a group

One of the first limitations of groups is that not everyone benefits from being in a group.

context. Some research on counseling and therapy groups suggests that one in ten individuals who participate in such groups is hurt in the process (Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1973). In short, groups have the power to heal and to help, but for some people they can be just as potent in contributing to pain or regression (McClure, 1990).

A second problem involves the composition of groups and individual personalities. It is important even before a group begins that potential members and leaders make sure that the person is right for the group and the group is right for the person. Groups are not appropriate for dealing with some types of problems or situations (Corey & Corey, 1992); these include, but are not limited to, resolving some trauma experiences or severe forms of mental illness. Such highly personal forms of mental anguish may need to be worked on individually before clients feel free to discuss them in group sessions. Likewise, in business settings the formation of a group to study a process may result in conflict and wasted time unless the personalities of those included in the group are considered beforehand (Conyne, 1989).

A third difficulty in using groups concerns confidentiality. An initial rule for conducting most groups is that words and actions within the group will not be discussed outside of the group. This guideline should be emphasized from the group's first meeting, and the members should be put in charge of monitoring themselves and others (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990). Still, there is little that group leaders or members can do to assure that private information is kept from being discussed outside the group. Once such private material is put in the public domain it cannot be recalled regardless of what the group does in response to such a breach.

A fourth limitation of groups is defusion of individual responsibility (Forsyth, 1990). In some groups, especially large ones, members may feel less personally accountable for their actions. They

...one in ten individuals who participate in such groups [counseling and therapy] is hurt in the process.

...groups have the power to heal and to help, but for some people they can be just as potent in contributing to pain or regression.

become submerged in the group. This is a process known as "deindividuation" (Festinger, Pepitone, & Newcomb, 1952). In such a process, the responsibility for behaviors is projected onto the group as a whole, or its leaders; problems are blamed on management, the mob, or some other force within the group.

A final drawback to groups is related to the level of training and skill of the group leaders. Ethically, group leaders should be taught how to deal with such dilemmas as dual relationships and how to deal with their values (Forester-Miller & Duncan, 1990; Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1990). In reality, some group leaders are underprepared to handle some situations effectively, and this in turn limits the effectiveness and productivity of the group as a whole. For instance, if leaders wish to impose their own values on members in regard to a controversial subject, members may feel alienated or antagonistic.

In reality, some group leaders are underprepared to handle some situations effectively, and this in turn limits the effectiveness and productivity of the group as a whole.

Summary

Working in groups is one of the main ways individuals can achieve personal and professional goals. Groups are a natural part of most people's lives since gregariousness is a trait of human nature, and participating in groups is usually a productive and beneficial experience.

Despite the familiarity most people have with groups, there are some barriers that must be overcome. Many of these obstacles are related to myths and misconceptions about what groups do and how they operate. But such inaccurate ideas as "people lose identity in groups," can be overcome and by providing factual information early in the group process many misunderstandings about groups can be corrected. The payoff is that group members can benefit from the group through learning new life skills, giving and receiving feedback, becoming socially connected, resolving past problems, and learning to be altruistic, creative, and giving. Limitations of groups can be understood more readily, too, such as the fact that groups are not for everyone and that productive groups are dependent on the composition, dedication, and good will of their members.

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Chapter 2

Types of Groups and Group Dynamics

> *A quest for insight connects us*
> *as we search for common ground.*
> *In the midst of new discoveries*
> *we form a bond with others.*
>
> —Gladding, 1993

Just as there are different types of people, the variety of possible groups is large. Basically, groups are set up to meet the purposes of the people who form them. Groups range in type from those that are primarily therapeutic to those that focus on the achievement of tasks (Corey & Corey, 1992; Gazda, 1989). Different types of groups have distinct impacts on their members and produce various outcomes. Groups, like people, have personalities of their own that must be understood if they are to be properly utilized.

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Group experiences are seldom neutral, and it is important to understand the internal workings of groups, or their dynamics. Group dynamics are the inside forces within groups that reflect their personalities. "Complex forces act on every group, whether known to members or not, and influence the behavior of the group" (Gazda, 1989, p. 60). Some of the major influences affecting group operations are the number of members within a group, personal agendas, and patterns of interpersonal interaction

(Gladding, 1991). Yet to understand group dynamics most fully "you must know that all groups have a basic structure, you must know that groups change and develop over time, and you must comprehend the difference between effective and ineffective groups" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 15).

In this chapter, several major types of groups will be examined and the functions and goals of each will be discussed. Group dynamics will also be explored, and two means of empowering most groups and their members—team building and brainstorming—will be highlighted.

Therapeutic Groups

Groups help foster personal change in the lives of their members, but they vary in how they characteristically bring about change.

The term "therapeutic" covers a wide range of groups. Within this classification are groups set up to provide or foster: (a) education and life skills, (b) counseling and therapy, (c) personal growth, and (d) self-help. These groups emphasize ways to assist individuals as they increase their knowledge of themselves and others. Two of the major methods used in these groups are feedback and interaction. Therapeutic groups also help members in acquiring new behaviors, attitudes, and coping skills (Corey & Corey, 1992). Groups help foster personal change in the lives of their members, but they vary in how they characteristically bring about change.

Educational and Life-Skill Groups

Educational and life-skill groups are learning and prevention oriented.

Educational and life-skill groups are learning and prevention oriented (Gazda, 1989). Educational group members have as their specific goal the acquisition of information (Masson & Jacobs, 1980). An underlying premise of these groups is that people learn well together; group interaction is seen as enhancing the discussions, examination, and understanding of material that has been presented. The skills used in an educational group are focused on instruction. They include lectures, group discussions of assigned readings, and the use of audio/video materials. These methods are intended to present knowledge in an interesting format and to personalize its usefulness to participants.

Examples of education and life skill groups include: groups of pre-adolescents learning proper dating behaviors; college undergraduate study groups; factory workers learning new machine assembly techniques; and middle-aged adults attending a financial planning seminar. For each of these groups, the leaders act as both facilitators and educators (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988); they encourage members to interact with each other. The number, length, and frequency of education or life-skill group sessions are dependent on the nature of the material being learned and the skill levels of group members and leaders.

Therapy and Counseling Groups

Therapy and counseling groups focus on remedial, growth, and prevention issues but to different degrees.

Therapy and counseling groups focus on remedial, growth, and prevention issues but to different degrees. They share a common concern for helping their members resolve the past and learn new ways of interacting (Gazda, 1989). However, they differ from each other on a number of factors.

Group therapy is generally set up to "alleviate specific symptoms or psychological problems, such as depression, sexual difficulties, anxiety, and psychosomatic disorders" (Corey & Corey, 1992, p. 10). These groups are long-term and concentrate on unconscious processes. Many therapy groups are generally open-ended and are conducted in psychiatric hospitals or the aftercare units of mental health clinics (Gazda, 1989). They may often be confrontive and intense. For example, the group therapy leader or other members may vigorously challenge a participant, such as an anorexic who denies that she or he has an eating and self-perception problem. Thus, if Jane, who is anorexic says "I am taking care of myself," the group leader or another member may say: "Jane, your continued weight loss and purging behavior is slowly killing you. You need to face up to the fact that you need help."

Group counseling, in contrast to group therapy, involves individuals who are less disturbed but who have difficulties they wish to resolve that are of a personal, educational, social, or vocational nature.

Group counseling, in contrast to group therapy, involves individuals who are less disturbed but who have difficulties they wish to resolve that are of a personal, educational, social, or vocational nature (Corey & Corey, 1992). These groups are primarily run in educational institutions or agencies (Gazda, 1989). They deal with specific, nonpathological problems of which participants are fully aware and which do not involve the need for a major personality change. For instance, group counseling may focus on how members may achieve goals such as relating better to a family member, becoming organized, relaxing in the presence of superiors at work, or acting appropriately in couple relationships. A conversation within the group might go like this:

John: I really want to go on to college but I'm just not sure I can.

Henry: When you say you're not sure you can, do you mean that you lack something such as money or intellect?

John: I feel I lack self-confidence. That's why I joined this group. I want to increase my sense of self-worth so I can achieve my long-term goals.

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Growth Groups

A growth group is based on the premise that individuals "have the potential to better understand themselves and others" as well as "to develop improved living skills" through their interactions in groups (Masson & Jacobs, 1980). Since people are not islands, growth can be enhanced through receiving feedback from others on how one comes across and on which acquired skills work and which one's do not. Growth groups are similar in many ways to counseling groups, but they are aimed more at helping "relatively healthy people function better on an interpersonal level" (Corey & Corey, 1992, p. 12). They also share the goals of assisting their members develop "positive attitudes and better interpersonal skills" in a group process model that helps individuals "transfer newly acquired skills and behavior learned in the group to everyday life" (Corey & Corey, 1992, p. 12).

Growth groups are similar in many ways to counseling groups, but they are aimed more at helping "relatively healthy people function better on an interpersonal level."

An example of a personal growth group might be a voluntary association of college students who are functioning well within their institutional environment but who are interested in becoming even more skilled in their interpersonal interactions. Growth groups might also consist of executives or managers of a corporation who want to advance as far as they can professionally. In both cases, individuals within these groups are generally healthy but they want to do even better—they want to grow.

In a growth group, the following exchange might occur.

Jane: I have been practicing piano since I was six. Even though I'm now 21, I don't know if I have really reached my full potential.

Leader: How will you know when you have?

Jane: I'm not sure. I suppose that there are measures. I want to discover what they are, both externally and internally.

Self-Help Groups

Self-help groups have been in existence on an informal basis since before recorded history. In modern times, they have been quite important to people with serious diseases and disabilities (Gladding, 1991). These groups are "voluntary gatherings of peers who share common needs or problems that are not being addressed by existing organizations, institutions, or other types of groups" (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1987, p. 511). The goals of these groups are to bring about change socially and personally. They eschew professional leadership or affiliation as a rule. They are also homogeneous and open-ended. In addition, self-help groups frequently provide their members with "a variety of informal member-to-member contacts" (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1989, p. 247). The best known self-help group in the United States is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

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There are several ways to classify self-help groups. These include self-help groups that focus on social issues, whether generally, such as groups to promote peace and the environment, or specifically or expressively, such as groups to promote government reform and Compassionate Friends (for parents who have experienced the death of a child) (Blumer, 1951). Some self-help groups actually combine these emphases. For example, a self-help group for gays and lesbians might be interested in both general and specific social issues and would probably advocate certain rights in a passionate manner.

Task Groups

Task groups deal exclusively with producing a tangible outcome—a product, an idea, or a process....

Task groups deal exclusively with producing a tangible outcome—a product, an idea, or a process, for example. With task groups, an emphasis is often put on the "management of people" to achieve an end result. In such cases, more attention is placed on cognitive and behavioral outcomes than on the care of people. If too much focus is directed in this way, group members suffer because they are treated more as objects than as human beings. Leaders of task groups have a difficult job of getting high quality work done while simultaneously taking care of those employed in the process.

Task groups are found in virtually all organizations. They usually take the form of committees set up to accomplish tangible goals (Conyne, 1989). Task groups are as diverse as quality circles and church seminars. Regardless of the form, task groups have much in common. For instance, they are usually time limited and heterogeneous. Productivity is influenced by the degree of member expertise, self-oriented needs, non-uniform operating procedures, formal status differences, and available time (Wood, 1989).

Regardless of the form, task groups have much in common.

There are certain, expected stages that task groups universally go through (Hare & Naveh, 1984). These stages differ somewhat, but not entirely, from those of some other types of groups. Most task groups have a four-stage process (Jones, 1973). The first stage is "orientation," where the purpose of the group is explained to its members. The second stage is "organization," where the focus shifts toward how to accomplish objectives. In this stage task group members concentrate on procedures and who will do what and when. Data-flow is the emphasis of stage three, which is characterized by the free and open sharing of ideas and emotions. Finally, in stage four, the task group emphasizes problem solving or the attainment of a goal. The focus is on producing a final product or solution that will justify the time and effort group members have spent working on a common concern. This stage is the beginning of the end for the group since members have accomplished the purpose for which they were formulated.

Nominal Groups

One broad-based means for helping groups make good decisions under time pressure is the nominal group, which utilizes group members to the fullest through a four-step process:

1. A problem is stated and group members are asked to generate ideas on paper.
2. Members read their ideas aloud to the group and the ideas are recorded on a chalkboard or flipchart.
3. Ideas are individually discussed by group members.
4. Members are asked to vote on the ideas presented by rank ordering them.

The obvious winner of the election is announced, if there is one. If there is no clear winner, the leader of the group may make a decision arbitrarily or discussions can be continued.

The nominal group format is applicable to many situations, especially where a decision needs to be made. This type of group allows decisions to be made in a shorter period of time than would normally occur in a group situation. It also reduces interactions among group members but it usually makes discussions more focused and productive (Hiam, 1990).

Quality Circles

Quality circles are an outgrowth of the total quality movement that was begun by Edward Deming in Japan after World War II. The premise behind quality circles is that all work is a process and that collectively teams of workers can increase their effectiveness and efficiency through a participatory management format; everyone is invited to contribute to the production of a product. Teams of workers meet regularly to discuss how they can improve what they are doing, and considerable emphasis is placed on identifying and solving problems.

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Organizations that have instituted quality circles have usually done so for two reasons: "to improve product quality and to improve the quality of work life" (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1987). Although quality circles are generally found in manufacturing companies, they also are applicable and used in service industries. Their principles can be applied to almost any task group as long as the emphasis of the group and its members is on continuous improvement, refinement of processes (as opposed to blaming of persons), and success through group cohesion and creativity.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics are the complex social processes within groups that affect their actions and outcomes (Lewin, 1948, 1951). These dynamics involve the interactions of group members and leaders over time, including the roles they take. Individuals have an impact on groups, just as groups influence individual members.

...the number of group interactions increases exponentially with the size of the group.

Group dynamics occur in all groups. On the surface, membership interactions appear simple, yet they are not. In fact, just the number of group interactions increases exponentially with the size of the group (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990). Thus, keeping track of communication patterns within a large group can be a demanding job. Added to the complexity of interaction is the fact that messages are sent within groups on both a verbal and a nonverbal level, and understanding the nature of this communication is crucial to comprehending what is happening within the group. For example, a member who distances himself or herself from the group as a whole is influencing how the group operates as well as making a statement.

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Group members may switch roles and patterns of interaction as the group develops; on occasions, however, there are groups where members will maintain one primary way of relating. Some roles group members assume at various levels are: (1) information and opinion giver, (2) information and opinion seeker, (3) summarizer, (4) energizer, (5) encourager,

(6) communication facilitator, (7) tension releaser, and (8) process observer (Johnson & Johnson, 1987, p. 69).

[The four stages of interpersonal groups are:] dependency, conflict, cohesion, and interdependence and are often given other names such as "forming, storming, norming, and performing."

On the interpersonal level, Jones (1973) delineates four stages that the group goes through and stresses the dynamics of each. These stages are known as: dependency, conflict, cohesion, and interdependence and are often given other names such as "forming, storming, norming, and performing" (Tuckman, 1965). The dynamics of these times will be discussed more fully in later chapters but a brief overview will be given here.

The first interpersonal stage is dependency or "forming." In this stage, group members are unsure of themselves and look to their leaders or others for direction. In therapeutic groups, this process is sometimes referred to as "milling around" (Rogers, 1970). It helps members gain a sense of themselves in the group and begin to establish trust. The second personal relationship stage is conflict, or "storming." The conflict may be overt or covert. The type and amount of conflict that is generated "has to do with jockeying for position, who has power, [and] how authority considerations will get resolved" (Conyne, 1989, p. 112).

Stage three of this model focuses on cohesion, or "norming," which can be defined as a spirit of "we-ness." This stage parallels the group task stage of "data-flow" and the Rogerian pattern of "the basic encounter" (Rogers, 1970). In it, members become closer psychologically and are more relaxed. Everyone feels included in the group and productive sharing occurs.

The final stage in the interpersonal domain of group development is interdependence or "performing." At this point in the life of the group, members are able to assume a wide variety of roles and be constructive in their interactions with others, and their level of comfort with themselves and with others has increased. This is the group's prime time for solving problems.

Ways of Enhancing Groups

Groups and the experiences within them are usually for better or worse. There are several ways groups may increase their potential and potency, but only two—team building and brainstorming—are described here.

Team Building

In any successful group, team building is essential. Members of the group must think and function like a team. "A team is a set of interpersonal relationships structured to achieve established goals" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 435). The desire to reach goals and develop individual skills and abilities are not enough to make a team. Rather, team work and team building are mental as well as physical processes. In productive organizations, there are small groups of motivated individuals who act in concert with each other and who make their group teams (and themselves) more competent.

The desire to reach goals and develop individual skills and abilities are not enough to make a team.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1991), there are five essential elements for ensuring that groups function as productive teams. These are as follows:

1. *Positive interdependence.* This is the perception that group members "are linked with groupmates in a way so that they cannot succeed unless their groupmates do (and vice versa), and/or they must coordinate their efforts with the efforts of their groupmates to complete a task" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 445). In these situations "we-ness" is stressed over "me-ness." Group members help each other in a cooperative manner. Athletic teams are probably the best example of positive interdepen-

..."we-ness" is stressed over "me-ness." Group members help each other in a cooperative manner.

dence, but business and civic groups can work in this way, too.

2. *Individual accountability.* This element is exemplified when the quality and quantity of what each member contributes to the good of the group is assessed. This process of evaluating and valuing allows group members to avoid duplicating others' efforts, highlights individual contributions, allows group members to support each other, clarifies responsibilities, and discourages social loafing (i.e., not pulling one's fair share of the load). Individual accountability is a way of motivating group members and helping them appreciate each other.

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3. *Face-to-face interaction.* This aspect of team functioning focuses on personal relationships among group members. It is through face-to-face encounters that individuals give and receive feedback. This type of interaction also promotes socialization, peer pressure to conform, and caring. In order to get the most from face-to-face meetings, the size of a group team should be kept small (i.e., ten or fewer persons).

4. *Small-group and interpersonal skills.* The fourth component to team success is combining individual and collective skills so that members communicate and work effectively with others. To be successful in this procedure, some individuals may need to learn how to interact more positively. All group members have to figure out how their own abilities can be strengthened, but the emphasis here is on maximizing the collective skills of the group.

All group members have to figure out how their own abilities can be strengthened....

5. *Group processing.* The fifth and final step in "structuring a productive team is ensuring that the team has a specific time to discuss how well they are (1) achieving their goals and (2) maintaining effective working relationships among members" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 448). Good teams take time to build. The group must allow enough time in its meetings for members to give and receive feedback from each other and to handle maintenance tasks within the group. Different types of teams will need

various amounts of time for this process. For example, a work team may take a set amount of time at the beginning of each session to evaluate how it is doing, whereas an athletic team may assess its progress after games and practices.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the process by which group members use free association to think of and quickly share a number of ideas related to a specific problem or situation. Some of the ideas will have more merit than others, but during brainstorming, criticism is withheld. The quantitative contribution of thought, rather than its quality, is encouraged. *After* the group has brainstormed for five or ten minutes, ideas are evaluated as to their merit and possibilities. The best and most plausible ideas are usually seriously discussed and may then be implemented; the rest are discarded.

If brainstorming is conducted properly, group members will have fun and gain insight while generating their lists.

If brainstorming is conducted properly, group members will have fun and gain insight while generating their lists. The outcome will be that group morale will go up and new ways of dealing with a situation will emerge. After a brainstorming session, the group leader needs to be sure that the group as a whole is congratulated for participating in the process. This type of group recognition goes a long way toward promoting positive feelings about oneself and other group members. It ensures the possibility that the next time the procedure is needed that group members will respond positively to it.

Summary

Basically, groups can be broken down into two categories: (a) those that are therapeutic and (b) those that are task oriented.

Groups vary as to type, mission, and purpose. Basically, groups can be broken down into two categories: (a) those that are therapeutic and (b) those that are task oriented. Therapeutic groups are centered around themes and issues such as education and life skills, therapy and counseling, personal growth, and self-help. They differ from task groups, which are primarily devoted to the achievement of a product, process, or service; nominal groups and quality circles are the two main types of task groups.

Group dynamics are the internal interactions of group members that influence how groups develop and what impact individuals have on their progress. A group affects its members, and individual members affect their group. It is essential that leaders and members pay close attention to verbal and nonverbal messages in groups in order to fully understand them. In most groups, the roles that individual members take on change as the group develops.

While there are necessary stages that groups must go through in order to mature, there are ways to enhance groups as well. Two of the best methods are brainstorming and team building. These techniques help members work together as a cohesive unit as they consider ideas and pull together to produce a result that is generally better than any one member of the group could personally achieve.

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Chapter 3

Group Leadership

You lead and I follow
  shadowing your behaviors
    like a school child imitates a teacher.
I am in charge of my life
  but in this group for the moment
    I concentrate on your words and actions.

—Gladding, 1993

Group leaders are asked to engage in a number of behaviors in order to facilitate the groups they lead. "The effectively trained leader demonstrates, in a timely manner, a variety of skills and techniques" (Conyne, Harvill, Morganett, Morran, & Hulse-Killacky, 1990, p. 32). Not all leadership behaviors are needed, or even appropriate, for all groups. Group leaders need to assess and use skills that are most relevant to their particular groups and, in order to do so, must be aware of the dynamics of groups in general as well as the most efficient ways of helping the group and its members achieve specific goals. "Behind every exciting, beneficial group experience is an energetic, knowledgeable, skilled, and enthusiastic leader" (Kottler, 1983, p. 91).

In this chapter we will examine personal qualities needed to be an effective group leader. We will also explore basic styles for leading groups and some major group leadership procedures. Guidelines for where and when to employ group leadership skills

Good leadership is a matter of combining personal and professional skills in a timely and appropriate way.

will be highlighted. Good leadership is a matter of combining personal and professional skills in a timely and appropriate way. Receiving supervision from peers and superiors on a regular basis is an essential part of this process (Conyne, et al., 1990; Trotzer, 1989). Following a professional code of ethics, such as the one developed by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (1989), is also essential.

Personal Characteristics of Group Leaders

If the personality of the group leader is flawed, the group will probably not succeed.

One of the most fundamental dimensions of group leadership is the personality of the leader (Corey & Corey, 1992). Skills in leading groups can be learned but, with rare exceptions, personalities cannot be modified extensively. If the personality of the group leader is flawed, the group will probably not succeed.

According to Conyne (1990, p. 32), some of the personal characteristics essential for group leaders are:

- "valuing people and working with people as a lifelong endeavor;
- personal honesty;
- courage to face adversity;
- awareness of personal goals;
- awareness of how one is perceived by others;
- flexibility/creativity;
- willingness to grow and change personally and professionally; and
- a generous helping of a 'warm personality'."

To this list Corey and Corey (1992) would also add that group leaders must also have an openness to self, to others, and to new experiences. Related to this openness is the ability of leaders to be nondefensive in coping with criticism from the group. In addition, effective leaders care for those with whom they work, are emotionally present for them, believe in group process, have confidence in themselves and group members, and have physical and psychological stamina.

Effective group leaders also possess a sense of humor that allows them to put "problems into perspective" and avoid becoming too serious (Corey & Corey, 1992, p. 20). Humorous stories and jokes that illustrate a point help members of a group remember information that they might otherwise forget. In addition, humor can help establish rapport between leaders and members if it is done in a nonoffensive and self-effacing way (Mosak, 1987; Posthuma, 1989). Through humor, group members may gain a different perspective on the world and on their lives and may begin making necessary and needed changes.

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Ways of Leading Groups

There are a number of leadership models. At one extreme are autocratic leaders who make decisions and expect the group to carry them out. At the other end of the spectrum are democratic leaders who place group decisions entirely in the hands of members. These two styles, and those in between, have both advantages and disadvantages (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). When and how leaders act within groups depends on the type of group they are leading, the importance of the issues being considered, and time constraints.

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Leadership styles are also based on previous education, experience, and supervision. To be effective, leaders must be sensitive to members' needs and the stage in which the group is working (Conyne, et al., 1990). The following categories are the primary leadership styles through which most group leaders operate. None need to be used exclusively, and the leadership strategy may change over time depending on the group's maturity and flexibility.

Authoritarian Style

Leaders who are authoritarian or autocratic do not ask for or take into consideration suggestions from group members. Instead, they structure and direct groups according to their own wishes, purposes, and the information available to them. This style of group leadership may be effective in accomplishing certain tasks within a limited amount of time, such as during a crisis. It might be characterized as a "John Wayne style" where the hero directs the interaction of a crowd in order to save the town from outlaws. However, this approach has drawbacks. Leaders who consistently run groups using this style may engender dependence from members as well as criticism, discontent, and aggression (Forsyth, 1990).

Democratic Style

Leaders who prefer the democratic approach when working with groups make certain that all activities are discussed by group members. They encourage cooperative behaviors and initiatives. They promote decision making and the building of consensus within the group. The atmosphere within such settings is often described as egalitarian (Forsyth, 1990). Members generally feel valued in such groups and morale is high.

The main disadvantage of democratic group leadership is that, compared with the autocratic style, it generally means more time must be devoted to decision making.

The main disadvantage of democratic group leadership is that, compared with the autocratic style, it generally means more time must be devoted to decision making. Another drawback is that leaders may not need as much information as the group generates. Finally, group leaders who utilize this method too frequently may be impeded from acting independently of the group.

Laissez-faire Style

This model of group leadership is based on the T–group movement of the 1960s. The T-group—or training group—model stresses that leadership develops in groups based on the needs and the forcefulness of members (Chadbourne, 1980). The premise of this approach is that members know intuitively what they need to do for themselves and for the group. It is assumed that members will take responsibility for the group and that leaders need to facilitate, rather than control, the situation. Leaders who follow this model rarely intervene in group activities.

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The advantages of this style are that group members may become more assertive and productive in taking care of themselves. This procedure may also promote groups taking care of their most pressing needs. On the other hand, the disadvantages of this type of group leadership are its dependence on the goodwill and emerging leadership of group members. It may also lead to apathetic and nonproductive groups.

Overall, effective group leadership styles are those that are in concert with leaders' personalities (e.g., openness, courage, creativity), and situational factors (e.g., the stage and maturity of the group, the personalities of members) (Forsyth, 1990). Several general guidelines to take into consideration in exercising group leadership have been given by Vroom and Jago (1978). These rules are based on procedures to avoid rather than actions to take. For example, one guideline advises leaders not to use an authoritarian approach if they do not have expertise or information in a particular area. Style in group leadership, as in other life situations, becomes a matter of preference, functionality, and ethics.

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Group Leadership Skills

Many of the skills necessary for leading effective groups have been derived from individual counseling approaches (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988). Some of these procedures can be very powerful in group settings. During group sessions, leaders must embody a variety of roles such as: (a) serving as a model; (b) being active, like a catalyst; (c) being involved as a participant; (d) being detached as a director of interaction; (e) serving as linker of ideas and people; and (f) being a facilitator of communication (Conyne, et al., 1990; Gladding, 1991). General group leadership techniques include the following:

Active Listening

Of all the interpersonal skills associated with group leadership, listening is the most essential.

Of all the interpersonal skills associated with group leadership, listening is the most essential. Although it is a skill that is often taken for granted, listening is not an automatic or well-developed skill for most people, but it can be cultivated and refined.

In order to be effective, listening should be an active rather than a passive process.

In order to be effective, listening should be an active rather than a passive process (Trotzer, 1989). Active listening requires that the receiver of a message assess what has been said on both verbal and nonverbal levels. This means paying attention to body language and to what is not being said. Body language includes mannerisms that reflect an openness or closedness to others. For instance, if members of the group nod their heads in agreement with what another member is saying, that member receives a positive message of approval. On the other hand, if members frown, cross their arms over their chests, or look at the ceiling when someone else is talking they are most likely bored or disapproving of the person or the message.

To make sure they are accurately hearing group members, leaders should repeat or summarize what they hear whenever possible before they respond.

They should also ask questions about any verbal or nonverbal messages they did not understand. For example, if a member talks about feeling inadequate but is smiling, the leader might simply say: "Barry, I am not sure what is happening. You are telling me that you are not capable of doing the task before you, yet you are smiling. Help me understand." Through this type of inquiry, messages become clarified.

Empathizing

A crucial component of listening is empathy—the ability to feel with another or put oneself in someone else's place. Leaders who show high levels of empathy in groups are generally more attuned to group members (Roffers & Waldo, 1983), and they are therefore more likely to attend to the needs of members and, in the process, to create greater satisfaction and a better outcome for the group on all levels. An example of empathizing is when a leader says to a member: "Sally, I hear the hurt coming through in your words and voice. I realize you are feeling depressed about what has happened in your life."

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Modeling

Modeling of behaviors is done by group leaders both overtly and covertly. On an overt level, leaders may try to teach members new life skills or correct ineffective or dysfunctional ways of acting (Gazda, 1989). In these cases, personal instruction takes place on an interpersonal level. On the covert level, group leaders serve as models for others because of the status they hold in the group. What they do is imitated or criticized by members of the group.

If leaders wish to help group members understand themselves better and facilitate a deeper level of group interaction, they disclose their own reactions to processes and to people. They also demonstrate

If leaders wish to help group members understand themselves better and facilitate a deeper level of group interaction, they disclose their own reactions to processes and to people.

appropriate ways of dealing with frustrations. For example, if group leaders have received discouraging or exciting news, they may briefly share it with the group before the group meeting/session begins or at another appropriate time during the session. Thus, a group leader might say: "Before we begin today, I want to let you know that I have just found out we are expecting the birth of our first child. I am overjoyed, and I want to let you be among the first to know this good news."

Clarifying

The ability to clarify is especially helpful in the initial stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 1992). This skill involves focusing on key issues by sorting through confusing or conflicting messages. The result is the ownership of feelings. For instance, if a group member says: "I don't know whether to work on personal or professional issues first," the group leader might respond: "You are unsure of which of these areas in your life is most important. Talk about that and what events are occurring in your life right now that are unsettling for you."

Questioning

Questions are often overused in groups. When they occur too frequently, the cohesion and trust within the group is eroded as members become defensive. Yet, questions that are asked in "a sensitive, purposeful, and timely manner" have a place in groups (Clark, 1989, p. 121). They are especially germane when they are open-ended and allow group members to expand on what they have just said. For instance, in reaction to a member who expresses ambivalence about being in a group, the leaders might ask: "What are your thoughts about being in this group?"

In the same situation, leaders who wished to ask a closed-ended question might say: "Do you want to

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talk about your ambivalence more?" Leaders can also convert questions into statements by responding in regard to the first case: "Tell us about ambivalence." The point is that leaders can do a lot to help or hinder the development of their groups by the ways they use questions and help others to use questions.

Reflecting

The skill of reflection is the ability to express "the meaning of members' communications, indicating that they are not only heard but understood" (Trotzer, 1989, p. 201). It is the difference between listening to words and hearing a message. Reflection involves both verbal and nonverbal communication. If initiated too soon in the group process, it may be threatening; timing is of the essence. An appropriate reflection from a group leader to a disgruntled member might be: "I hear your words and sense your discontent. I wonder how these feelings are related to this group."

Linking

If a group is to grow, individual members must feel they are a part of the whole. Linking accomplishes this goal by connecting individual members with one another by highlighting the common elements they share. This skill is especially important in promoting member-to-member interaction as opposed to member-to-leader dialogue (Corey & Corey, 1992). It is often the role of leaders to initiate linking procedures. For example, in a work group leaders might note that two women assemble a product in sequence with one another and ultimately are dependent on each other for the quality of the finished goods.

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Moderating or Facilitating

...moderating has a facilitative quality; it ensures that certain group members neither dominate nor withdraw.

"Moderating is a regulatory skill used by a leader to govern the group interaction, ensuring that all opinions are aired" (Trotzer, 1989, p. 203). If done properly, moderating has a facilitative quality; it ensures that certain group members neither dominate nor withdraw. Being a moderator and facilitator requires that group leaders stay objective. One way to do this is to call on members who have not spoken up and solicit their opinions. For example, the leader might say: "Claire, we haven't heard from you today. Tell us what you are thinking." Another form of moderating/facilitating is blocking the output of dominant or insensitive members. For instance, the leader might say: "Jeff, the group values you and your opinions but, in fairness to everyone, we need to give others an opportunity to speak. I'd like for you to listen for awhile now before you contribute to the group again."

Blocking

Blocking, which is an essential leadership skill, means preventing group members from invading the rights of others by bombarding them with questions, gossiping about them, or breaking their confidences.

Blocking, which is an essential leadership skill, means preventing group members from invading the rights of others by bombarding them with questions, gossiping about them, or breaking their confidences (Corey & Corey, 1992). Leaders may block inappropriate transactions among group members by using verbal and physical words or symbols. For instance, when a member begins to probe too deeply into another's past, group leaders may either challenge the questioner by noting what he or she is doing, or by using a hand signal to indicate that the questioner is out of bounds.

Confronting

The act of confronting is aimed at helping group members understand any lack of congruence between what they may be saying and what they are actually doing. It is a way of pointing to inconsistencies that members display without attacking the personhood of those involved (Gladding, 1991). For example, a leader may say to a member of a quality group: "I hear you saying you want to do your work more efficiently. Yet, I notice you are not giving the group any ideas on constructive ways the work process could be altered."

Supporting

The act of supporting a group or its members is to offer reinforcement, encouragement, and backing (Trotzer, 1989). This procedure is useful in drawing out more reticent members of the group. It alleviates anxiety and helps make members feel more valued. It also sends a message to the group as a whole that an overly critical or judgmental approach will not be the atmosphere in which the group operates. An example of support can be found when group leaders make positive comments about individual group members, such as: "Janet, I really appreciate the way you just summarized what you saw happening in this group."

Initiating

Sometimes groups get stuck on a topic or in a stage of development. When this happens, group leaders need to take action to bring about change and introduce new directions to the group. Initiating can take the form of giving suggestions, such as offering advice or information. It can also be offered as an evaluation of what the group is doing vs. what needs to be done, i.e., the goals that must be accomplished. Time lines are highlighted when this type of initiation occurs. Finally, initiating can come through feedback to members and the group as a whole. Feedback focuses on reacting objectively to behaviors in the

Initiating can take the form of giving suggestions, such as offering advice or information.

group and is meant to increase the awareness of members and the group as a whole (Gladding, 1991).

An example of initiating that includes most of the elements just mentioned is when a group leader says: "I see that we are half way through the number of sessions we planned. I am also aware that at times our conversations get sidetracked onto subjects that are not relevant to our purpose. I would like to suggest that we begin monitoring ourselves as a group in order to make our final sessions more productive."

Summarizing

The ability to summarize is "a must for all group leaders."

The ability to summarize is "a must for all group leaders" (Jacobs, et al., 1988, p. 81). Groups that are working usually get input from members with various views. "Without a summary, members may pick up on small or irrelevant points" (Jacobs, et al., 1988, p. 81). Summarizing allows important material to be highlighted and focused on. It increases the productivity of the group. An example of an effective summary is when the leader states at the end of a group meeting: "Today, some of you have shared with us the steps you have taken to achieve goals you set in this group. Most of these steps have involved your initiation of actions you were previously reluctant to take. This common theme is one we should all think about between now and the next meeting of the group."

Showing Enthusiasm

Being enthusiastic about a project in the group or the purpose of the group is one of the best ways to lead.

Being enthusiastic about a project in the group or the purpose of the group is one of the best ways to lead. This type of attitude invigorates others and helps them become more self-motivated. "Just as sloppy language demonstrates sloppy thinking, so flat and unexpressive language demonstrates flat and unexpressive thinking" (Autry, 1991, p. 84). Effective group leaders have some emotional investment in what they do, and it shows in their work. They especially have high energy at the beginning and end of the group process.

Verbalizing

The ability to speak precisely and concisely is implied in almost all of the skills previously mentioned. The skill of verbalizing is crucial for some groups more than others, however. Groups that are cognitively based, for instance, such as those that stress education or work processes, need highly verbal leaders. In such settings, verbal skills are used to supply specific information to members and to get feedback. Verbal abilities include the following:

The ability to speak precisely and concisely is implied in almost all of the skills previously mentioned.

- Using quotations and information from authorities helps support a main point the leader is trying to make.
- Using rhetorical questions about a particular point the leader has laid out; these are questions not meant to be answered but rather to reinforce a point that has been made.
- Using puns and rhymes, or other play on or with words. To illustrate and reinforce an important technique, for example, a leader might say: "In order to do something *right*, first *write* it out." Word rhymes can also be helpful in emphasizing a point. For instance, in regard to promoting cognitive flexibility in group members, a leader might say: "If it's trouble you wish to prevent, be sure your ideas aren't inflexible like cement."
- Figurative speech, containing imagery, analogies, and metaphors, helps to paint word pictures in group members' minds—pictures that may even linger after the words themselves are forgotten (Green, 1992, p. 37). While becoming a good manager has to do with

learning how to use the metaphors of organization, "becoming a leader has much to do with changing the metaphors" (Autry, 1991, p. 71).

Leadership Roles

In ideal group situations, leaders and group members are open with themselves and with others and avoid taking on static or nonproductive roles. Unfortunately, few group situations work completely on this level. Designated group leaders, and some members who emerge in leadership roles, end up assuming general and specific roles as needed for the good of the group. These roles are usually temporary and differ from the overall identities of those who assume them (Gladding, 1991).

Roles are appropriate and beneficial if leaders are flexible in using them. General roles are ways of behaving that leaders may enact in almost any group situation. They become specific when they are tailored to a particular group. These roles are helpful if they are congruent with the members' needs and match the skills of leaders. However, the effectiveness of roles is determined both by the groups in which they are employed and the leaders who use them. At their best, roles help build the group, maintain it, and keep it focused on a task (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1989). Roles are often characterized according to the leadership skill that is dominant in them. Group leadership roles fill a need if they help change particular persons or situations in groups.

...[Leadership] roles help build the group, maintain it, and keep it focused on a task.

According to one expert (Lee, 1992, p. 63), some of the most universal leadership skills are those where group leaders function as initiators, clarifiers, elaborators, coordinators, testers, and summarizers. Each of these roles will be briefly explained.

1. *Initiator.* In this role, group leaders suggest ways for members to examine a topic. This is

a direct initiative into the group process. For example, a leader may say: "Have you ever thought of looking at this situation from the point of the other person?"

2. *Clarifier.* In this role, the leader tries to explain to all group members the points being made or the issues being considered. Such a role may mean that the leader asks direct or hypothetical questions to the group as a whole or to particular individuals. Comments are solicited in such an approach. For instance, the leader might ask: "So what do you as a group think about the fact that we are fairly powerless as people to change anyone but ourselves?"
3. *Elaborator.* The role of an elaborator is to expand ideas so that group members attain more background. In elaborating on a point about the rationale for behaving in certain ways, the leader might recount what preceding decisions had occurred. For instance, in a work group the leader might say: "The fact that we are now having to cut prices and wages is a result of bad management practices in the past. We hope these cuts will be temporary and allow us to regain market shares."

The role of an elaborator is to expand ideas so that group members attain more background.

4. *Coordinator.* A coordinator helps people work together by making sure everyone knows what his or her assigned task or expectation is. In essence, a coordinator pulls people and material together. In this role, the leader might say: "Joe, I want you to be responsible for registration at the conference. Maria, I would like for you to take charge of hospitality." A coordinator is crucial to the work of a task group.

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5. *Tester.* A tester's job is to be sure that members of the group are "on the same wavelength." The group leader acts in the role of a tester by asking members their understanding

of particular points, such as: "What is our mission?" "When do we expect to achieve our group goals?" "How do we go about helping each other in this group?"

6. *Summarizer.* The job of summarizing is one that group leaders must do continuously. This duty requires that leaders review the material that has been covered in regard to its most salient points. In this way, leaders can assess the progress of the group (Lee, 1992, p. 63). Leaders can also help the group by having individuals summarize what they have heard during the group meeting.

The job of summarizing is one that group leaders must do continuously.

Overall, leadership roles should be viewed as just one part of group leadership. Their impact will depend on the ways they are used with other leadership skills and the situations in which they are employed.

Guidelines for Beginning Group Leaders

Groups may differ in size, composition, and purpose, but some group leadership skills are fundamental, especially for beginning group leaders. Among the most potent of these are ones outlined by Masson and Jacobs (1980, pp. 53–54). While some of these skills stress attributes of leadership previously mentioned, beginning group leaders need to focus on the following points often.

Clarity of purpose. Clarity of purpose refers to the reason the group was formed, how it can help its members, and possible problems and outcomes. Leaders will fail if they do not think ahead in regard to why they are conducting a group and what they expect. Groups will also collapse out of boredom unless their members focus on their common and individual purposes.

Level of commitment. The level of commitment to a group is "the extent to which each member has decided that the experience may be of value and is willing to put forth effort, attending the session" (Masson & Jacobs, 1980, p. 53). If members are not committed, the group will suffer due to a lack of attendance or effort. Leaders can help ensure that level of commitment is high by making sessions as interesting and relevant as possible. On occasion, they may also hold individual sessions with group members.

Group focus. Successful groups have a focus as well as a purpose. The focus of a group is usually on a process, person, or interpersonal topic. In order to keep the group focused, the leader may have to play an active role in structuring and directing the group. Clarity of statements by group leaders help in keeping members focused.

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"Cutting-off" members. Sometimes individuals will get the group off track if their talking is not directed or stopped. For instance, it may be necessary for a group leader to interrupt a member who is giving the group too much information about a situation. The cut-off reminds that member and others to be concise and to the point so that the group may be productive. Cutting-off someone should ideally be done in a firm but polite and respectful manner.

Thinking of members as individuals. Groups include individuals with varied backgrounds and interests. It is crucial to recognize the uniqueness of each person in the group as well as the universal purposes. When members are seen as individuals, group leaders can tailor the experiences and activities of the group so that the attention of all members remains high. A good way of concentrating on group members from an individual perspective is to meet informally with them whenever appropriate occasions arise.

It is crucial to recognize the uniqueness of each person in the group as well as the universal purposes.

Leader energy. The level of energy displayed by a leader sets the tone for the group as a whole. "The

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group rarely functions well when the leader shows little energy" (Masson & Jacobs, 1980, p. 54). Leaders can help energize their groups by making sure their remarks are relevant; those who speak with enthusiasm and who use eye contact will help increase the energy in their groups.

Meeting time and place. Groups should have an established time to meet on a regular basis, with an allotted amount of time for each meeting. Groups that do not abide by this procedure are usually nonproductive because members will be late or absent. The place in which the group meets is of uppermost consideration. Settings that are likely to be noisy, gloomy, or subject to interruption should be avoided. Environments that are isolated, pleasant, and quiet are ideal (Gladding, 1991).

Second-guessing. The term "second-guessing" refers to leaders anticipating problems or difficulties and taking steps to either prevent them or minimize their influence. This type of mental preparation allows the group to function to its fullest; it keeps the unexpected from upsetting the progress of the group and its members.

In addition to the above, there are some guidelines that beginning group leaders need to follow that will serve them well as they gain experience. These procedures ensure that enough attention is focused on the processes, products, and people within a group. Their implementation will help to promote healthy groups.

"Workers want to know how much you care before they care how much you know."

1. *Take enough time in leading the group to let members know you are concerned about them as people.* In growth or therapy groups, attention is naturally concentrated on individuals, but in task groups this same sensitivity may not be as obvious. "Workers want to know how much you care before they care how much you know" (Autry, 1991, p. 17). Except in crisis situations, group members are more likely to follow a leader with whom they have a

personal relationship than one who is technically skilled and interpersonally aloof.

One way to promote interpersonal connectedness is by greeting and speaking to members of the group regularly. This can be done in a systematic fashion by being the first to arrive at a meeting and shaking hands with members as they enter. It can also be done through informally speaking to each group member during a meeting and soliciting responses from even the most reticent.

2. *Work toward consensus and cooperation.* Group members often bring experiences and skills to group sessions that are invaluable. The ideas that are generated from members' backgrounds can go a long way in helping the group develop. Group leaders need to be sure that the competition to talk about ideas in a group is minimized and that everyone cooperates in sharing time. Reaching decisions through group consensus is a valuable way to build relationships and ownership of decisions. It eliminates members' thinking that they have won or lost points within the group.

Group leaders need to be sure that the competition to talk about ideas in a group is minimized and that everyone cooperates in sharing time.

3. *Encourage playfulness as well as work.* The adage "all work and no play makes Jack (or Jill) a dull person" has much truth to it. People need time to relax if they are to be productive. A five- or ten-minute break is fine in the middle of a group meeting, but it is not sufficient to promote the playfulness of group members. Sometimes by having members engage in a playful activity in the midst of their discussions or work, a more informal and productive environment is created in a minimum amount of time.

4. *Celebrate accomplishments and give compliments whenever possible.* Nothing succeeds like success, but in order for one to feel successful, he or she needs positive feedback. The total quality programs of many companies and institutions have designated days to celebrate work teams' accomplishments; these times are usually festive and enjoyable.

Nothing succeeds like success, but in order for one to feel successful, he or she needs positive feedback.

Other types of groups are in need of similar events. The act of celebrating can be summarized on an informal level at the end of each group session. Compliments are best given immediately following the behaviors leaders wish to reinforce (Gladding, 1991).

Summary

Leadership is a combination of creativity and rigor.

Group leadership is a multidimensional process. The personal and professional skills needed to be effective vary with the types of groups being conducted. "Effective group leadership requires spontaneous and creative responses to complex and unrehearsed situations" (Conyne, 1990, p. 33). Leadership is a combination of creativity and rigor. It involves interpersonal interactions that are concrete and beneficial. In order to foster a positive group atmosphere, leaders must use their influence in a purposeful and productive way so that the group and its members are challenged to consider changes.

Several of the many ingredients in the production of group leadership have been covered here. One essential element is the personality of group leaders. If these individuals are not open to their own needs, feelings, and ideas, and to those of others, the group will probably not be productive. Group leaders also need to be warm and outgoing people who have a genuine concern about the people they direct. Almost anyone can be taught group leadership skills, but how these skills are manifested is critical.

There are both benefits and drawbacks to all styles, and flexibility is needed in working with groups.

Another key aspect involved in leading groups is style. Sometimes leaders may need to be autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire. There are both benefits and drawbacks to all styles, and flexibility is needed in working with groups. Flexibility must also be shown in regard to individual group leadership skills. Just as an accomplished musician learns how to play all the keys of an instrument, group leaders must master the qualities involved in multiple group processes. This requires that leaders learn to change roles when needed.

Finally, this chapter outlined some fundamental guidelines for beginning group leaders. It is essential at the start of one's experience in leading groups that effective procedures be followed. At different times in group experiences, leaders need to focus on members, the group as a whole, on purposes, and on progress toward goals. They also need to be sure to celebrate accomplishments in ways befitting the groups they are leading. Overall, the process of being an effective group leader is one that is continuous; it requires time, effort, practice, and refinement.

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Chapter 4

Planning a Group

In the beginning, there is hope,
a feeling that leads to action.
In this group, I reach out
in the knowledge that it is worth the risk
to meet others as they begin the journey
of becoming hopeful.

—Gladding, 1993

Groups differ in their scope and purpose. In order to set up effective groups, leaders must make plans and decisions that will have an impact on the success or failure of the group. For instance, leaders must decide whether to work from a theoretical or an atheoretical approach. Then comes the job of defining the type of group that is to be established. A third part of the planning process is to clarify the group's objectives. After these initial steps are taken, other procedures such as screening and selecting members can take place.

The actions one needs to consider in planning a group will be covered in this chapter. These processes are necessary, but not in and of themselves sufficient, to enable a group to run effectively. Yet, if the planning of a group is done with care and precision, the chances are greatly improved that the group will be productive. Care, thoughtfulness, and thoroughness are all critical in group planning. Groups are most effective if the developmental stage of the

Care, thoughtfulness, and thoroughness are all critical in group planning.

group is kept in mind during the planning process (Zimpfer, 1986).

The Nature of Pregroup Planning

Pregroup planning is the first step in the forming of groups. It involves many processes that, when systemically followed, help groups achieve their goals. Within this stage, leaders design their groups in accordance with theoretical and pragmatic considerations. This means they take into account the "structures, processes, and objectives for the group" ahead of time. "The design is based on self-knowledge (personality...professional strengths and limitations); knowledge of prospective members (personality, psychological maturity, concerns...); organizational considerations (space, group size, number and length of sessions...), and feedback from previous groups" (Ponzo, 1991, p. 21). Planning is a complex and multifaceted endeavor.

Basically, preplanning a group is an exercise in balancing the ideal with reality.

Basically, preplanning a group is an exercise in balancing the ideal with reality. "In many settings, it is impossible to select exactly the perfect combination of group members based on approximate commonality, heterogeneity, and size" (Brandler & Roman, 1991, p. 107). Likewise, leaders may not be able to secure their first choice of location. Therefore, compromise is a necessary part of the preplanning process and should be seen as a challenge, but not a barrier.

It is helpful in planning to have a picture in one's mind of what the group will look like if everything is perfect. By visualizing the best of situations, the group leader can aim toward conducting an ideal group. The leader can also become more cognizant through this procedure of potential problems within the group and what compromises may be necessary. By being aware of difficulties beforehand, the leader can plan responses to general problems or circumstances such as member composition or scheduling difficulties and to specific situations such as member tardiness, conflict, or overdependence (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990).

The Use of Theory

Group leaders have a major decision to make at the outset of any planning process. They must decide whether to work from a theoretical perspective and, if so, what theory or theories to use. Theory is the bedrock on which most groups are based. It is like gravity in keeping group leaders grounded while still allowing flexibility (Gladding, 1990). Leaders who chose to conduct a group from an atheoretical position—that is, to let the group develop outside theoretical guidelines—run certain risks. Groups conducted in such a manner may get out of hand and into trouble. Leaders are then faced with the inevitable job of helping members and the group as a whole without anything to fall back on except pragmatic considerations. In contrast, leaders who operate from a theoretical perspective are much more likely to enable their groups (and themselves) to have positive experiences because they have a set of principles to guide them before and during actual group sessions (Corey & Corey, 1992).

Theory is the bedrock on which most groups are based.

The realization that one is usually wiser in conducting a group from a theoretical perspective does not resolve the question of what theory to pick. Most theories can be classified according to the emphasis they place on specific behaviors. These behaviors can be described as those that focus on thinking (T), feeling (F), or acting (A) or all three (TFA) (Hutchins, 1984). Thinking theories concentrate on changing or modifying one's cognitions and are represented in the work of Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck, and Eric Berne.

Most theories can be classified according to the emphasis they place on specific behaviors. These behaviors can be described as those that focus on thinking (T), feeling (F), or acting (A) or all three (TFA).

Feeling theories deal with the expression of emotions and are emphasized in the writings of Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers, Jacob Moreno, and Irvin Yalom. Acting theories are those that emphasize overt behaviors and are represented by the theories developed by B. F. Skinner, Albert Bandura, John B. Watson, and William Glasser.

No theory, regardless of its emphasis, is totally comprehensive. However, even theories that seem to concentrate strongly on a single human emphasis, such as behavior, do not exclude dimensions of the other two approaches (i.e., cognition and affect) (Baruth & Huber, 1985). In other words, theories that are primarily concerned with affect or emotion acknowledge that in the process of change people must modify their thoughts and behaviors as well. This nonexclusive quality of theories is utilized to the fullest in self-help groups which indirectly make use of all major theories (Gladding, 1991). A knowledge about the nature of theories should be used by leaders in almost all group situations. By so doing, they maximize the resources of the group and the individuals within it.

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Ethical Considerations

Just as it is important to consider theoretical dimensions of groups, it is equally vital to plan the criteria by which one will respond to ethical aspects of group work. Historically, group leaders have believed in ethics philosophically but have not necessarily practiced them strongly (Gumaer & Duncan, 1982). Deciding how to help group members from an ethical perspective and exactly what to do in troublesome situations is a vital task that group leaders and the group as a whole have to accomplish. Codes of ethics, such as the one developed by the Association

Deciding how to help group members from an ethical perspective and exactly what to do in troublesome situations is a vital task that group leaders and the group as a whole have to accomplish.

Specialists in Group Work (1989), are essential documents that group leaders need to become familiar with and professionally ascribe to.

There are many ways that leaders and members of groups can learn about ethical conduct. One way is to receive general training in interpreting group codes of ethics through role playing vignettes of troublesome situations (Gumaer & Scott, 1985). Another way to teach about group ethics is to structure a skills competency course for group leaders (Gumaer & Martin, 1990). In such a course, key ethical issues are addressed through having participants examine both the developmental stages of groups and the specific areas that need their attention.

Among the ethical dilemmas that must be dealt with before any group begins are those that revolve around the training of the group leader and the use of co-leaders (Corey & Corey, 1992). Conducting a group requires extensive training in group dynamics, personality theory, human relationship skills, and professional issues. Working with a group is different from helping an individual. Leaders who do not have adequate training or supervision in conducting groups should not engage in this activity.

Among the ethical dilemmas that must be dealt with before any group begins are those that revolve around the training of the group leader and the use of co-leaders.

Recruiting members and ensuring that they have adequate preparation is vital, too. There are individuals who are not ready or are not able to work in a group, and they should be screened out of participating in the group and instead be offered other needed services. Confidentiality, the avoidance of dual relationships, the proper use of techniques, and the freedom to exit the group without being pressured to stay are other ethical issues group leaders must address (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993; Gladding, 1991). Special issues related to different types of groups must be explored also. Conducting a group for recovering addicts, for instance, is not the same as running a growth group for high school seniors.

Recruiting Members to a New Group

It is not enough to preplan a group. Leaders must take active steps to put plans into action. Recruiting new members is one of the most vital aspects of this process. The formation of groups require that potential members be contacted and invited to consider joining. Whenever possible, the leaders of groups should recruit their own members. In counseling and therapy groups, this procedure is essential in finding appropriate members. Recruiting may not be an option for some task groups, and leaders may have to work with current office or assembly personnel. However, when recruiting is an option, such as for developing a specific new task group, leaders should do so.

Whenever possible, the leaders of groups should recruit their own members.

The best way to recruit members is through personal contact, which has two advantages. First, it allows potential group members to commit themselves to working with a specific person as a leader. Second, "through personal contact the leader can enthusiastically demonstrate that the group has potential value for a person" (Corey, Corey, Callanan, & Russell, 1992, p. 37). For instance, the leader might say to a perspective member: "You have told me that you are interested in improving your personal skills in dealing with anger. In this counseling group, anger is one of the issues we will consider. We will examine how we deal with other difficult feelings, too, such as fear and pride."

The best way to recruit members is through personal contact....

When personal contact is not possible, leaders can announce the formation of a group through the use of colleagues in community or through agencies, schools, clinics, industries, or churches. Leaders can also print flyers or advertise in local or trade publications when such action is appropriate and within ethical guidelines. An example of this latter practice might be the formation of a grief-support group in a setting where the leaders do not personally know everyone who might potentially benefit from such a service.

Announcing the group through printed media has two costs; one is monetary and the other is personal. The first cost requires group leaders to have a budget for printing; the second cost requires leaders to have patience and knowledge in dealing with individuals who respond to announcements but who are not appropriate for the group.

Regardless of the strategies employed in recruitment, leaders should inform potential members of the specifics of the group, such as goals, methods to be used, and risks. They should probe into the recruit's past experience in groups, too. The expectations of members and the leadership style of the leader should be discussed. This type of information is especially relevant in counseling or therapeutic groups. One way to disclose information of this nature is through a personal/professional self-disclosure statement. This type of statement contains essential information about the leader's background and general information about appropriate conduct within a group. An example of such a statement is the following:

Regardless of the strategies employed in recruitment, leaders should inform potential members of the specifics of the group, such as goals, methods to be used, and risks.

Professional Services Statement of Susan Smith

> I am a professional counselor and have worked with individuals, families, and groups for the past five years. My graduate work is from the Ohio State University (M.A.) and the University of Virginia (Ph.D.). In both of these settings I took advanced courses in group work, and at Virginia I conducted group training for members of the residence life staff. My background includes leading growth groups, counseling groups, and grief groups. I have also worked with the Sara Lee Corporation in conducting task groups. I am a member

of the American Counseling Association and its division, the Association for Specialists in Group Work.

During the first session, I will explain to the group as a whole the rights and responsibilities of group membership. This will be done orally and in writing. It is essentially the same information I will give to you in our pregroup interview. If you have any difficulties in regard to the group and the policies I outline in regard to its conduct, please make an appointment to see me and discuss these. I subscribe to the ethical guidelines of the Association for Specialists in Group Work.

I want this group experience to be a positive one for you, so please do not hesitate to ask me about matters of which you are unsure. My telephone number is (919) 749-2222 and my office is Room 232 of the Smith Building.

Screening Potential New Members

The process of screening potential members is essential for the success of therapeutic groups and some task groups.

The process of screening potential members is essential for the success of therapeutic groups and some task groups. If screening is neglected, people who do not work well together may be placed in the same group, and the results are usually negative (McClure, 1990). Screening helps prevent the entrance into the group of difficult, immature, or inappropriate individuals. It allows group leaders to observe how potential new members act in a novel situation. "Clients often demonstrate the same defenses upon meeting the counselor that they engage in other tension-inducing experiences, allowing for the counselor to begin to identify individual's defenses" (Clark, 1992, p. 152). Once group leaders know something about how a potential member relates in an anxiety-filled situation, such as the interview, leaders can decide whether to invite or exclude that person to participate in the group.

Pertinent questions to ask in order to find out about a potential group member vary, but open-ended and projective fill-in-the-blank queries seem to work well. For instance, asking *who, what, when, where,* and *how* questions elicit interpersonal and intrapersonal information. The answer to some of the following questions and inquiries yield valuable results.

- "What do you expect to gain from this group experience?"
- "Have you ever participated in groups before? How were those experiences?"
- "How do you handle interpersonal conflict?"
- "When will you know you have achieved your goals in the group?"

Pertinent questions to ask in order to find out about a potential group member vary, but open-ended and projective fill-in-the-blank queries seem to work well.

Having potential group members write down answers to questions as well as verbally express answers goes a long way in double checking the accuracy of responses. Written communication can help verify obvious or subtle defenses. For example, a person may say she is surrounded by friends at all times, yet in answering an open-ended questionnaire may state that her greatest fear is "loneliness." In any case, the more individuals can be worked with through screening at the beginning of a group, the better the chance for later success.

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Depending on the type of group to be run, leaders should screen group members in regard to: (a) similar interests and backgrounds, (b) willingness to participate and focus, and (c) medical and/or mental history. Since each type of group is unique, a person who might be perfect for one group may be inappropriate for another.

Group Size

The size of the group makes a difference in how it functions, and leaders must take this information into account as they plan. Having too large a group hinders interaction and makes personalizing information more difficult. On the other hand, if the group is too small, leaders may have to work harder than they might otherwise have to to elicit group interaction.

An ideal number in most groups for adults is between 10 and 14 persons.

An ideal number in most groups for adults is between 10 and 14 persons (Gazda, 1989). If the group grows above 14, then members tend to form subgroups. If a group has been set up for therapeutic purposes, the number of group members should be limited to 7 or 8 persons (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990).

Groups for children usually contain fewer members, generally 5 to 7 (Gazda, 1989). Likewise, groups that are established to educate or to disseminate information will be bigger than counseling or therapy groups. For instance, a classroom guidance group or a childbirth education group might have 20 to 40 people. Groups that are designed to run for an indefinite or extended length of time will generally be larger than short-term groups (12 sessions or less). Open-ended groups (those that allow members in at any time) contain more members than closed groups (those that start and end with the same members).

Groups for children usually contain fewer members, generally 5 to 7.

Selecting Members

Selecting group members is crucial to the success of the group. A resistant or unstable member can throw the group off track and seriously damage its effectiveness, and a disruptive member may have to be removed. The occurrence of either adversely affects the group. Immature and disruptive members take up other members' time, create turmoil, lessen trust, and foster frustration (Brandler & Roman, 1991; Gladding, 1991).

One way to select group participants is on the basis of their similarity or dissimilarity to each other. There are advantages and disadvantages to choosing members either for a "homogeneous" grouping (in which members have many similarities) or for a "heterogeneous" grouping (in which members have many dissimilarities). "The question of whether to form heterogeneous or homogeneous groups cannot be answered conclusively. Discussions around this topic are fervent and varied" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990, p. 14). The ultimate choice of who is chosen depends on what group leaders want to accomplish (Beasley & Childers, 1985). However, the general characteristics of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups can be described.

Homogeneous Groups

A homogeneous group is composed of people who are similar in regard to background, problems, goals, or outlook. These groups are sometimes "topic-oriented." Participants are attracted to them because they clearly realize that the group will include others like themselves (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990).

In homogeneous groups, cohesiveness and trust usually build rapidly while conflict is minimized. Because the group is united by an overt theme or purpose, members may be able to bypass introductory experiences and begin working together sooner. For example, if a group is made up of white, middle-class men who are all engineers and who all work for a particular service company, they may get down to business quite rapidly. Similarly, a homogeneous group of adolescent debate squad members could quickly get to work on a common project. Other types of homogeneous groups that might gel quickly would be those organized around such issues as substance abuse, gay or lesbian issues, aging, or

In homogeneous groups, cohesiveness and trust usually build rapidly while conflict is minimized.

single parenting. In brief, homogeneous group members have many shared experiences and concerns they can use to help connect them personally or professionally.

The disadvantages of homogeneous groups are related to a lack of freshness, excitement, or newness in the group.

The disadvantages of homogeneous groups are related to a lack of freshness, excitement, or newness in the group. "The focus of the group may become tunneled as members resist broadening discussion beyond the stated topic" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990, p. 15). In addition, homogeneous groups composed of people who share common disorders or weaknesses may be stalled in their efforts to help each other. When people share similar outlooks on life or who work together in the same setting, they are likely to develop patterns of interaction that are difficult to break. For instance, a "pecking order" may be established in a group of office workers that influences their interaction together. Unless someone notices and challenges this behavior, it is likely to continue and may well prohibit growth in the group and among its members. Furthermore, members of homogeneous groups may challenge leaders more and protect one another from considering new ideas or directions.

Heterogeneous Groups

...[Heterogeneous] groups provide an "in-depth and powerful learning experience for those involved, as variety in personality and group conflict are more like society at large."

Members of a heterogeneous group come from a variety of backgrounds and are at different stages in their development. Such groups provide an "in-depth and powerful learning experience for those involved, as variety in personality and group conflict are more like society at large" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990, p. 15). Another advantage of this type of group is the input members give each other about their interactions; it is difficult to fall back on past patterns of behavior because others are always questioning the rationale behind interactions. Although there may be more anxiety and turmoil in these groups, they may be quite productive over the long run (Yalom, 1985).

There are several disadvantages of heterogeneous groups. The first is that these groups may be too diverse to be productive. For instance, the variety among group members may lead individuals to consider themselves unique; they may think of themselves as isolated from others and fail to appreciate how differences can be helpful in altering views and adding richness to ideas. When this happens, members of the group tend to withdraw either physically or psychologically and fail to pursue their goals.

There are several disadvantages of heterogeneous groups: ...[they] may be too diverse..., [they] may require a long time to reach major decisions, ...[and they] may lack a focus.

A second disadvantage of heterogeneous groups is they may require a long a time to reach major decisions. Some individuals need to make changes quickly. For example, potentially addicted persons cannot keep trying abusive substances for a long time without running the risk of endangering themselves and others. A third drawback to heterogeneous groups is they may lack a focus. The group at times may be compared to a circus where there is much activity but where there is difficulty concentrating on one or two main points. The atmosphere created in such a group may be exciting and enhancing for individuals who have been isolated and need a broad experience, but such a milieu may not be helpful for people who need assistance in one particular area.

Establishing Structure

Structure refers to the norms under which groups operate, both psychologically and physically (Brandler & Roman, 1991; Gladding, 1991). In order for groups to be successful they must have structure. While some groups may have more elaborate structures, most groups have the following structural elements:

Time

"Groups move more productively when there is a known beginning and a known end."

Time is an important factor for both individual group sessions and for the overall number of sessions to be conducted. "Groups move more productively when there is a known beginning and a known end. Time limits should be set not only for the number of weeks the group is to meet but also for the length of the individual sessions" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990, p. 70). Most individual group sessions involving adults last from about 90 minutes to two hours. Sessions for children are briefer, and for elementary students group times may only be 20 to 30 minutes. The main exception to the limited time norm is for marathon groups, which tend to run in 24- to 48-hour sessions.

The number of weeks that a group is scheduled to meet will vary. Some groups are short-term while others are long-term. Theorists such as Yalom (1985) and Gazda (1989) have given differing definitions of "long-term" and "short-term." Generally, short-term groups are those that meet for 12 or fewer sessions, and long-term groups meet for a longer period than this. Whether a group should be long-term or short-term depends on the purpose of the group and its leader(s). For example, a work group may be able to complete its task in as few as six sessions. A therapeutic group for the abused, however, may need to meet over a period of a year or more.

Goals

...leaders must plan to concentrate on the goals of groups and their members from the very first session.

Groups that lack a purpose are like ships without rudders. They may make a lot of waves but do not get anywhere fast or directly. Therefore, leaders must plan to concentrate on the goals of groups and their members from the very first session.

The goals of groups can be broken down into those that are general, specific, process, or outcome-oriented (George & Dustin, 1988). General goals deal with establishing a psychological environment in which people feel comfort and trusting of themselves and others, and groups have this as a focus. Specific goals are those that are particular to the group as a whole or to individual members. For instance, a general goal for a task group might be to do their jobs right the first time while a more specific goal for the same group might be to reduce job errors from 10 percent to 2 percent.

Process goals are those that are achieved in stages. For instance, for the member of the task group just mentioned, the process goals might be to reduce job-related mistakes by a certain percentage after five weeks and by an even greater percentage after ten weeks. The ultimate, or outcome, goal is what these process goals aim to achieve. In the case of the task group, the outcome goal is zero errors.

Process goals are those that are achieved in stages.

Open vs. Closed

Whether a group is open or closed is contingent on its mission and the needs of its members. An open group is one that continues without a set number of members or even without the same members being present each time. Some support and therapeutic groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, are run on an open group format. "As group members move from being novices to veterans, their role in the group changes gradually to becoming an informed role model. Newer members provide the veterans with a downward social comparison" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1993, p. 49).

Closed groups are set up to run for a specific length of time with a designated number of individuals. If a member discontinues for any reason, he or she is not replaced; instead, the group proceeds as before with the remaining members in attendance. The advantage of this arrangement is that members become more trusting of and comfortable with each other and with the group process over time. As a

Closed groups are set up to run for a specific length of time with a designated number of individuals.

result, they may work harder on certain issues than they would within a group that is always in flux, and in a less confrontational manner (Gruner, 1984). The disadvantage of this type of group is that some members may drop out or the group may become stale or toxic because of a lack of fresh ideas and people.

Rules

A group whose rules are explicit and enforced consistently works more efficiently.

Among the most important rules are those that deal with respect for others and for the group as a whole.

A group whose rules are explicit and enforced consistently works more efficiently. Generally, the fewer rules a group tries to maintain, the easier it is for the group to function. Certain rules are necessary, however.

Among the most important rules are those that deal with respect for others and for the group as a whole. Interactional rules help everyone focus on the importance of agendas important to themselves or to the group itself. Leaders need to plan to emphasize these rules at the beginning of the group by making such statements as:

- "Only one person talks at a time."
- "Physical attacks are never allowed in the group."
- "Between-session meetings of group members are discouraged."
- "What is said in the group stays in the group."

Being absent or late for meetings are also commonly dealt with in group rules, as are expectations for how to behave or focus within the group. Being absent is a way to impede the group and personally resist change (Trotzer, 1989). For instance, a group may spend much time and energy dealing with a member who is regularly absent and never get its work done. Therefore, the number of absences that are allowed during a group should be set during the planning stage and articulated to potential members during screening. "Similarly, lateness is equally disruptive" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1989, p. 58). To curb habitual lateness, the leader must let all members know initially that they will be dropped if they get into such a pattern. [Otherwise, the excuses that are offered for this behavior will become convincing cover-ups.]

In regard to expectations, group members need to be instructed before the group begins about how they are to participate in it. Some groups are here-and-now focused, while others are more historic. Members who understand what is expected from them beforehand are much more likely to exhibit appropriate behaviors. In planning the group, leaders need to plan how expectations will be conveyed—whether verbally, in writing, or both.

In regard to expectations, group members need to be instructed before the group begins about how they are to participate in it.

Physical Setting

Meeting places that work best are quiet, comfortable, easily accessible, and private. Rooms should be comfortable in regard to lighting, decor, and seating arrangements. "The relative size of the chairs needs to be considered. They should be approximately the same size" (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988, p. 26). Educational groups may also need tables to use as writing desks, but in some other types of groups—especially therapeutic groups—tables create barriers and should be removed or arranged in such a way so as to not distract from the group's proper work.

In order to create the most direct and interactive communication pattern possible, group members should arrange to sit in a circle. The circle format connotes equality and encourages members to talk directly to others, and fosters group cohesion (Gladding, 1991). Leaders need to plan to secure and arrange the setting before group members arrive, or they must deal with an initial disruption of the way people have arranged themselves and with potential resistance and rebellion.

In order to create the most direct and interactive communication pattern possible, group members should arrange to sit in a circle.

Summary

This chapter has covered the essential elements related to planning a group. These factors include the nature of the planning process itself, as well as the use of theory, ethics, and leaders' professional or personal disclosure statements. Practical factors that influence how successful a group may be have been discussed. Recruiting, screening, and selecting members must be considered in planning a group. Similarly, the size of the group and its structure are important points that need to be addressed. The length of time each group session will run, whether the group will continue to meet over a short or a long period of time, its rules of conduct, whether it will be open or closed to new members after it has been fully established, and the physical setting in which group meetings are held all have an influence on how well the group functions, for better or worse. These are factors that must be planned.

Most groups will contain a surprise or surprises within them, regardless of their structure or how careful their advance planning has been. Still, the most effective and productive groups are those whose leaders have given advance thought and planning and who have already developed tentative strategies to deal with emergencies or with other unexpected situations. Planning cannot resolve all difficulties, but it can cut down on known problems that have the potential to disrupt the group or steer it off course.

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Chapter 5

Beginning a Group

Beginning a group is like the first day of school
or a first kiss,
A time filled with excitement and fantasies.
Possibilities are before us.
We need courage, amid the emotion,
to embrace them.

—Gladding, 1993

All types of groups have some kind of beginning, entry, or forming stage. In psychotherapy, for example, the sharing of dreams or fantasies by individual members is one way to initiate a group process, while defining its goal or goals is an appropriate place for a task group to start its work. A good beginning for the group is important because first impressions go a long way in setting expectations for group members. The start of a group is "crucial in the development of norms that either facilitate or inhibit...open communication" (Rugel, 1991, p. 74).

A good beginning for the group is important because first impressions go a long way in setting expectations for group members.

Most groups form slowly and gradually because it takes time for members to establish trust in one another, in the leader or leaders, and in the group process. During this beginning phase "group members experience, to a greater or lesser degree, classical approach-avoidance conflicts...wanting to share, explore, belong, and be close with others yet fearing vulnerability, hurt, and rejection" (Brandler & Roman, 1991). Before a group can be productive, it must first find a way for its members to become comfortable in resolving this mixture of feelings and to orient toward others in the group. This orientation, which generally takes from one to three sessions, is known as *forming* (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

This chapter examines a variety of factors that effect the initial forming sessions of a group and how each contributes to these sessions.

Essential Tasks of the First Sessions

Regardless of the type of group, there are several tasks that must be accomplished during its initial meetings. Probably the most important of these is the need to establish and clarify rules by which the group will operate (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990). These rules should be outlined early on because they play a crucial role in creating structure and security for group members. If group members are not aware of what is expected of them, they will not feel secure and will tend to act inappropriately (Seashore, 1974). The resulting atmosphere within the group is likely to be chaotic and competitive.

A long list of rules is not needed and usually will not be remembered. Instead, most group members need specific information on the basic aspects of how the group will be run, such as when, where, and for how long the group will meet, and what is expected of individual members (Posthuma, 1989). For example, the leader of a task group might initially state: "The purpose of our group is to explore how we can work more efficiently and drive down the cost of doing our jobs correctly. We will meet in this location every Wednesday from 2:00 until 4:00 p.m. I will encourage each of you to actively participate and contribute ideas about how we can be more cooperative and effective."

...most group members need specific information on the basic aspects of how the group will be run, such as when, where, and for how long the group will meet, and what is expected of individual members.

A second task that should be accomplished at the beginning of a group concerns confidentiality (Corey, 1990). Group members need to know what they say will not be used against them. In the total quality literature there is an emphasis on driving fear from the work place (Crosby, 1984). In growth and counseling groups, there is a need to know that personal or sensitive material will not be shared outside the boundaries of the group (Yalom, 1985).

In growth and counseling groups, there is a need to know that personal or sensitive material will not be shared outside the boundaries of the group.

One way to establish confidentiality is to define it for group members. For example a counseling group leader might say: "What we say in this group will be held in confidence by all members unless we agree that it can be reported to others." Such a statement lets group members know that what they say will not be conveyed to others outside of the group without their permission. This concreteness is a first step in alleviating fear and helping members open up to themselves, to others, and to the group process. It can be reinforced if the group leader gives an example. For instance, the leader might state: "I first realized the importance of confidentiality in a group when someone said they did not like the rules of this place. The person was talking about the process of how things are handled, but another group member thought the remark was a criticism of a specific person and reported it to others as such. You can just imagine the pain everyone felt before this matter was resolved. It hurt."

A final task that must be achieved in a beginning group is to secure a meeting room and arrange it properly. This task is extremely important because "the room where the group meets and its set-up greatly enhance or distract from the group's development" (Levine, 1979, p. 7). Group members will generally respond positively to an attractive setting, such as a room with windows that is painted in warm or neutral colors. Using the same room consistently generally adds to the welfare of the group.

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How people are seated makes a difference, too. Seating arrangements can help members either avoid or participate in group interactions (Myrick, 1987). For instance, theater-style seating may be appropriate if group members are being asked to sit and study material that will help them in their jobs or personal relationships. In such a setup, chairs are placed in rows and everyone's attention is directed toward a designated teacher or leader. This type of seating minimizes the interpersonal exchange of ideas and inhibits group discussion; it allows the instructor to lecture and convey a lot of information in a relatively brief period of time.

The opposite of theater-style seating is a circle arrangement, as discussed in Chapter 4. A circle encourages group dialogue and member participation. For problem-solving discussion, circular seating promotes the exchange of ideas and enables group members to feel equal with each other (Gladding, 1991). A variation of a circle format is a "fishbowl," with an inner- and outer-circle arrangement. The "fishbowl" is ideal if a group wants another group to observe how it works and either critique it or learn from it (Myrick, 1987).

Beginning an Initial Group Session

The first of the helpful behaviors [in starting a group] is to stress the group's purpose. In order to get off to a good start, most groups need a unifying theme on which to focus.

Just as there are multiple stratagems for starting a game of chess, there are many ways to open a group's first meeting, and no single procedure will ultimately determine the success or failure of the group. What is done and how well it is accomplished depend on the type of group that has been set up, the skills of the leader, and the readiness of members to participate. There are certain actions, however, that can either help or hinder the group, depending on how often and how intensely they occur.

The first of the helpful behaviors is to stress the group's purpose. In order to get off to a good start, most groups need a unifying theme on which to focus. In a therapy or growth group, the leader might state at the beginning: "We are here to learn more about how we function in new situations and how others perceive us." The leader might then suggest an exercise that would engage each member in assessing his or her level of anxiety or skill in a novel situation. In a task group, the leader might draw the attention of the group to their own jobs and solicit ideas from group members about their understanding of group goals related to work; thus, the leader and group members would begin to interact while specifically focusing on the mission before them.

A second helpful action during the initial session of a group is to make introductions. Introductions personalize relationships, help establish trust, and contribute to the building of teamwork as group members become better acquainted; this process tears down stereotypes and promotes communication and cooperation. In an educational group, for example, individuals might know each other by name yet be limited in their personal knowledge of one another. Through learning more about a fellow participant, an informal relationship (or even a friendship) may be formed. Introductions are equally if not more important in growth or therapy groups, since group members must relate personally to each in regard to emotional issues.

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Introductions can be handled either factually or through experiential exercises (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988). The latter is usually more fun, although it may increase some members' anxiety. One way to handle the anxiety that may come during introductions is to stay as cognitive as possible; by keeping material on an intellectual level, members feel safer. One exercise to promote this type of introductory process is called "Joe Friday," named for the character in the "Dragnet" television series of the 1960s. Joe's favorite line in questioning someone was: "Just the facts."

In this exercise, group members are asked to spend five minutes writing down five facts that describe their lives and then to share this material with the group. To make these introductions as relevant as possible, the group leader notes similarities between members wherever they are obvious. For example, the leader might say: "Jane and June, you share a common bond in that both of you are grandmothers."

In addition to beginning introductions with an exercise such as "Joe Friday," there are seven other ways to begin a group (Jacobs, et al., 1988, pp. 52–55). These include:

1. Have the leader take about five minutes to describe the purpose of the group and then do an introductory exercise.
2. Have the leader take only one or two minutes to describe the purpose of the group and then do an introductory exercise.
3. Have the leader begin with a long introduction about the purpose of the group and then get the group engaged in working on that task.
4. Have the leader begin with a brief introduction about the purpose of the group and then get the group engaged in working on that task.
5. Have the leader begin with a brief introduction about the purpose of the group and then break the group into dyads to talk about their understanding of what is being said. (Later, the group may reassemble as a whole and get reports from each pair.)
6. Have the leader begin with a brief introduction about the purpose of the group and then have group members fill out a sentence-completion form. (This form should be constructed by the leader with the purpose of the group in mind. If successful, such a procedure helps the group as a whole focus on their task.)

7. Have the leader begin the group with an experiential exercise related to the purpose of the group. (This last procedure is especially effective when group members know each other well and understand why they have been assembled.)

The Group Leader

The group leader is the hub around which the group initially revolves. It is up to him or her to be prepared and alert to the needs of individual members and the group as a whole. One of the most crucial aspects by which a group succeeds or fails involves the effectiveness of its leader. The effectiveness of a group leader is interactional in nature and involves the relationship between "the leader's qualities, group members' qualities, and situational characteristics" (Forsyth, 1990, p. 229). An effective leader in one group may be less effective in another group. In large groups, co-leaders may be necessary.

One of the most crucial aspects by which a group succeeds or fails involves the effectiveness of its leader.

Adaptability, dedication, and sensitivity are three key ingredients group leaders must possess. Leaders of task groups must also concentrate on bringing continuous improvement to their work or projects (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). Group leaders must be attuned to the needs of their members and be able to handle diverse, and adverse, situations. This requires that they keep focused on the initial purpose of the group yet be prepared to modify their plans for the group if necessary.

Adaptability, dedication, and sensitivity are three key ingredients group leaders must possess.

Group leaders always experience a tension between needing to pay attention to the completion of tasks and also having to be responsive to the emotional needs of members (Bates, 1965). Thus, focus will vary, from time to time, between group output and the affective needs of group members. For example, if members are feeling alienated from each other, they will voice anger or sarcasm despite what the group leader tries to do; at such times, it is best to attend to the emotional needs of the group as a whole. In the forming stage of the group, the leader should be sensitive to levels of anxiety among group members individually and collectively. If leaders are unprepared personally or professionally to help the group, there is a strong likelihood that the group will not reach its potential (Guy, 1987). Group leaders must therefore be trained to assume certain responsibilities within the group initially and over the long run.

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The leader's impact on a group is initially quite strong (Bates, Johnson, & Blaker, 1982). Members look to leaders for support, instruction, and guidance in the beginning stage of the group. If leadership is weak then the group will likely struggle and may even suffer. There are several ways for group leaders to help the group get off to a good start. One is for the group leader to model appropriate behavior through action and words (Corey, 1990). Group members often learn what to do and what not to do through imitating the leader.

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A second way leadership may be positively exercised is to engage members in an initial icebreaking activity (Trotzer, 1989). There are numerous activities that build cohesion and promote members' trust in the leader and in one another. Among these are "trust walks," where one group member leads another blindfolded member. This type of exercise is likely to be well received in almost any type of group, and it can be modified as needed.

There are two techniques the leader of a task group can use to promote trust. The first is self-disclosure, where the leader tells members something about himself or herself (Jourard, 1957). The second is by introducing exercises that demonstrate how group decisions are usually better than those made individually. One such exercise that goes by several names involves decision making in a simulated wilderness survival situation, where the collective wisdom of the group results in more creative, innovative, and practical solutions (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1969).

A part of the leader's responsibility in a group is to give himself or herself some time to think about and plan for the group before beginning each session (Corey, 1990). This process involves reviewing the membership of the group and devising ways to help each member become invested in and involved with others. In completing this process, the leader does a mental review of what he or she knows about members in the group. For an initial session, this information is limited. However, in all types of groups, leaders must remind themselves that, if the group is to be successful, they must be active in the beginning of the group, help group members unite in their focus, and draw group members out to participate actively (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

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Other ways that group leaders assist the group involve the repeated emphasis to members of the reasons the group was formed and the goals of the group and its members. It is sometimes helpful to ask rhetorical questions, such as "Is that our purpose?" Asking members to make comments about what they think about certain matters is another way leaders can help individuals to become more active in the group.

As the group begins to gel and members become more relaxed, confident, and cohesive, the group leader becomes less active in directing and more involved in supporting (Gladding, 1991). By this point, clarification has taken place and the roles of the leader and members are less ambiguous while group identity is clearer (LeCluyse, 1983). The group no longer needs a strong, authoritarian figure but rather a democratic leader. Each group is different, so there is no firm rule for when leaders should change gears and disengage from directing the group, but a common rule of thumb is that gradual changes are easiest to make and lead to smoother transitions.

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Group Members

Some group members are more vocal than others. Some have more issues to resolve or ideas to contribute. The fact is that no two group members or group experiences are the same; yet the specific makeup of a group will influence how the group begins. A good guideline for initially working with a group is to accept what members say at face value. This type of acceptance lowers resistance and encourages participation (Haley, 1973). Members feel they are being heard and begin to relax more.

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In order to have a successful group, members must think and feel they have some ownership of the group's content and direction. Otherwise, they are likely to remain passive or, at the other extreme, to become aggressive or openly antagonistic. Even the most enthusiastic group member, however, may be unsure of how much he or she wants to be involved and may begin to use any one of several defense mechanisms to avoid involvement. A defense mechanism is an unconscious distortion of reality that protects people from painful affect and conflicts that would otherwise arise (Clark, 1991). It may manifest itself individually or in the group as a whole (Donigian & Malnati, 1987). Some of the most common defense mechanisms are as follows:

a. denial, where individuals refuse to acknowledge the facts that are before them or refuse to take responsibility for their actions;
b. displacement, where individuals project their feelings onto someone who is a relatively harmless substitute;
c. identification, where people assume the actions of someone they admire, perhaps including other group members;
d. intellectualization, where persons cognitively discuss matters with little or no feeling even if the issues involved are prone to evoke emotions;

e. projection, where individuals disown their thoughts and feelings and ascribe them to someone else;
f. rationalization, where people make plausible excuses for behaviors they do not wish to change or feel they cannot alter;
g. regression, where persons revert back to a developmentally earlier way of interacting;
h. repression, where individuals consciously fight to keep certain thoughts from their awareness; and
i. undoing, where people try to negate a behavior by acting in an opposite manner either mentally or physically (Clark, 1992).

Any of the above behaviors are a form of protection and resistance "that moves the group away from areas causing discomfort" (Krieg, 1988, p. 98). If the group is to work together, these types of behaviors must be confronted and resolved.

Confrontation can take several forms. If the resistance is being manifest by one individual, the leader may simply note openly what is happening and what the effect is. This type of confrontation might take the form of a statement such as: "Joe, I notice that every time we begin talking about the importance of accepting things in your life that you cannot change, you try to debate the issue. Tell me what is happening with you on this issue." By making such an observation and invitation, the power of resistance is weakened because the dynamics of the action are now open for everyone to view and the group member now has an opportunity to talk about a matter that is of personal importance.

Another way of confronting resistance is through structured exercises (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). In this type of procedure, group members have an opportunity to discuss their feelings openly, and this gives members a chance to ventilate negative emotions and to identify and invest in the group itself. A way of structuring this confrontation is to invite members to play a game called "Concerns." In this exercise, members pair up and list all of the concerns they have about being in the group; after they report their list back to the group as a whole, the leader lists all the unique and common concerns of the group. Ideas on ways to deal with these concerns are then elicited from group members, and the suggested remedies are tested through role-playing.

A final way of confronting resistance is through the use of subgroups (Higgs, 1992). This involves dividing the group into subgroups of twos and then fours "to share openly and discuss anxieties, reservations, or expectations....This technique develops peer support" (p. 72) in a nonthreatening atmosphere. It lessens anxiety by having group members interact face to face and helps make covert topics overt.

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Group Process

Group process is simply the way the group proceeds. Process is the result of group dynamics—that is, the forces within the group such as interactions among members (Jacobs, et al., 1988; Lewin, 1948). For example, if two members initially feel competitive with one another for the group's attention, the results will be quite different than if members see each other as equal and cooperative helpers.

Eric Berne (1972), the founder of transactional analysis (TA), wrote a book entitled *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* The title of the book is indicative of where many group members are after opening remarks and introductions have been completed—they wonder what they should do next. Novice group participants often think that once opening remarks and introductions are completed the group is ready to work. In reality, however, the group is in a state of flux, and members are usually too unsure of themselves to begin addressing matters of concern.

Thus, in the first meeting of a group, the leader needs to have an agenda to share with members to help give them direction. The agenda outlines what the group will try to accomplish during the meeting. In task groups, the leader might focus members' attention on the processes by which they complete their assignments and start a discussion on how these procedures could be improved (Crosby, 1984). In growth or counseling groups, the leader may help members concentrate on themselves and the changes they wish to make.

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Throughout the life of the group, but especially during the forming stage, the leader should carefully monitor processes going on inside the group. By concentrating time and effort on the dynamics occurring between group members and on how issues are resolved, the group leader will get a good feel for the personality of the group and its members. This information will allow the leader to make the best use of the group's time by attending to critical processes rather than surface or superficial behaviors.

Ending a First Session

There is no one way to properly end the first session of a group. Regardless of the procedure used, enough time must be allotted to be sure the events that transpired can be processed. For a 90- to 120-minute meeting, 10 or 15 minutes should be set aside for closure (Corey & Corey, 1992). This allows enough time for the leader and members to reflect on what has occurred and take care of any unfinished business as needed. Whatever the activity used during closure, group members should feel more hopeful than when they began. They should leave the group believing that the experience of working in a group setting was and will be beneficial to them and others.

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In some groups, simply saying "good-bye" will be sufficient as an ending. However, the best way to end a group is to be sure that material that was brought up in the group is summarized and that group members are reminded about the next group meeting (and its purpose, if appropriate). This summary of the group session can come from members or from the leader. It is often helpful to have each member of the group comment on something he or she observed or learned during the group session; this type of exercise, known as "making the rounds" or "rounds," places responsibility on the entire group membership to observe group dynamics and accomplishments (Gladding, 1991). The earlier it is started, the more likely members will invest in the group.

Summary

This chapter has covered the elements of an initial group session. In order to have a successful group, a good beginning is necessary. This beginning can be enhanced when the group leader is aware of tasks he or she must take care of before the group begins. These essential tasks include: talking about group rules, defining and stressing the importance of confidentiality, and securing an appropriate room in which to meet and making sure it is arranged properly.

The group leader assumes much of the responsibility for getting the group off to a good start; he or she must be adaptable, dedicated, and sensitive.

In addition to these general tasks, group members and leaders must be sure to: (a) focus on the purpose of the group, (b) introduce themselves to one another, and (c) concentrate on orienting the group in a specific direction. The group leader assumes much of the responsibility for getting the group off to a good start; he or she must be adaptable, dedicated, and sensitive. In addition, the leader must balance the emotional needs of group members with the challenge of accomplishing personal or professional goals. There is always a tension within the group because of these conflicting needs, and planning ahead for each group helps the leader lessen that stress. However, resistance among group members and by the group as a whole must be confronted when it occurs.

Group members have responsibilities, too, such as being committed to the group and participating in it. They need to be reminded of their responsibilities in the initial sessions of the group, and they also may need to be coaxed or coached to accomplish their goals. This type of work is a process that continues after the first session has ended. The process can be facilitated when members and leaders recognize and address needs of individual participants or the group as a whole.

Sufficient time should be allotted for closing the initial group session to ensure that the final minutes are not hurried and that the group has an opportunity to reflect on what has occurred. This usually means 10 to 15 minutes should be reserved for ending the session. While the group leader may take most of the responsibility for summarizing and reminding members of the next session, a "making the rounds" exercise is usually helpful in getting members to think about the group and to take more ownership of it.

...a "making the rounds" exercise is usually helpful in getting members to think about the group [and the next session] and to take more ownership of it.

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Chapter 6

The Transition of a Group

I am aware of personal changes.
As my feelings go up and down like a see-saw
and my mind races fast like an engine.
Such growth is unexpected
but I welcome it with anticipation.
Within I am secretly scared
of who I may become.

—Gladding, 1993

All groups go through transitions. Some are more unsettling or turbulent than others, but nearly all are predictable. The initial conflict in the group is referred to as the transition or "storming" stage (Tuckman, 1965). It is a major event in the development of a group as members cautiously evaluate their positions and initiate or establish roles for themselves (Brandler & Roman, 1991). As an expected occurrence, it must be handled properly, otherwise the group may flounder and reach an impasse.

As an expected occurrence, [the initial conflict] must be handled properly, otherwise the group may flounder and reach an impasse.

In this chapter we will examine: (a) the dynamics involved in transition, (b) factors that effect the completion of this stage, (c) the task of the group leader, (d) goals for members, and (e) structured strategies that help the group as a whole work through this time and achieve a sense of balance.

Dynamics and Tasks of the Transition Stage

The transition stage is characterized by a "struggle for control and power and some conflict with other members or the leader."

In the transition stage, group members ideally become less cautious and more open to their thoughts and feelings. As they work through their resistance and defensiveness, individual members become concerned about where they fit in the group and what their own roles will be (Brandler & Roman, 1991; Corey & Corey, 1992). This is a time of inner questioning and outer turbulence as members become self-aware and assertive. The transition stage is characterized by a "struggle for control and power and some conflict with other members or the leader" (Corey & Corey, 1992, p. 184).

There can be considerable tension in this stage as members compete in either a subtle or a blatant manner. Conflict that results from such competition brings "drama, excitement, change and development" to the group and to the individuals involved (Yalom, 1985, p. 352). It provides a means whereby the group can grow because of the challenges raised by members to others' ideas. Through this process, innovation and creativity take place, but often in an unsettling manner (Cowger, 1979).

One way management can take place is for those within the group to realize that disagreements between individuals are normal and the expression of differences inevitable.

Thus, it is important that group members and leaders manage conflict and frustration at this time and keep it from turning into outer or inner aggression (Kormanski, 1982; McClure, 1990). In so doing they "prevent chaos and promote cohesion" (Korda & Pancrazio, 1989, p. 116). One way management can take place is for those within the group to realize that disagreements between individuals are normal and the expression of differences inevitable. When these facts are realized, along with the knowledge that the denial and suppression of conflict is destructive, everyone has the opportunity to deal directly and constructively with the transition process. The dynamics underlying the stage and the energy of the group can thereafter be utilized appropriately (Forsyth, 1990).

Factors that Affect the Transition Stage

Several factors have an impact on the transition stage of groups. Among these are: (a) problems in communication, (b) rules and regulations, and (c) personality characteristics. When and how these factors combine will have an effect on the length and intensity of conflict that surfaces during this period.

How a person speaks is as crucial to the communication as what he or she says is crucial. For example, using threats, bullying, or punishment to convey information can be both contentious and unproductive. "When one uses such interpersonal strategies, the likelihood of group conflict becomes greater" (Forsyth, 1990, p. 360). Similarly, negative comments or demands can lead the group in undesirable directions. For instance, if someone in a group remarks that what another member said was "stupid and indefensible," aggression and disagreement are likely to arise.

Personality differences are an important factor in the amount of conflict generated in a group during this storming period. Groups generally contain both cooperators and competitors, and the number of each at any given time can make a difference to how well the group functions. "Cooperators tend to be accommodative, interpersonally sensitive, and concerned that everyone in the group benefits" (Forsyth, 1990, p. 362). They are likely to stress how everyone in the group wins when the group accomplishes a goal. "A competitor, in contrast, deals with conflict by confronting it and overwhelming it at all costs. Such a person views group disagreements as win/lose situations and finds satisfaction in forcing his or her ideas on the others; concession and compromise are only for losers" (Forsyth, 1990, pp. 362–363).

In a homogeneous group of cooperators, conflict during the transition period may be relatively low. The same type of uniformity in a group composed of competitors is likely to be interpersonally stormy. In

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most task and counseling groups, membership is usually heterogeneous and the dynamics that occur during this stage are difficult to predict ahead of time. Regardless of the group's makeup or purpose, group members and leaders should be aware of the potency of membership personalities in influencing the generation and resolution of differences.

The best policy concerning rules and regulations is that they should be laid out and agreed to before the group begins.

Rules and regulations are a third factor that play a major part in turmoil during the transition period. The best policy concerning rules and regulations is that they should be laid out and agreed to before the group begins. If instead they are set up unilaterally and arbitrarily by the group leader after the group has started, members yield to feelings of being disenfranchised and rebel.

In cases where members subtly or blatantly defy rules, recognition of the behavior must be made by the group leader; compliance with the rule or negotiation about it then takes place until the matter is resolved. These procedures are necessary if peace, harmony, and progress are going to be achieved (Friedman, 1989; Kline, 1990). One method the leader can use in regard to disputes over or violations of rules is to ask the group as a whole for help in reaching a resolution. Group members may have a number of ideas that are helpful, and after participating in this process, they will be more likely to embrace and follow the agreed-upon solutions.

Group Leadership During the Transition Stage

A group leader's reactions during the transition stage will either have a positive or negative effect on the transition process. In responding to stormy interactions within the group, timing is crucial (Posthuma, 1989). As in other group stages, leaders can be overinvolved or underinvolved. An overinvolved leader may cut off interactions among members when tension increases and thereby prevent members from reaching a successful resolution for working through difficulties. For example, an overinvolved leader might say: "John, I see you and Allen are at odds about what would be most helpful to you right now. Rather than let you continue your discussion, I am going to make the decision for you."

An underinvolved leader, on the other hand, is likely to let group conflict grow to a point where successful resolution is extremely difficult. For example, the leader might allow an argument between two individuals to become so intense that one physically threatens the other. Rather than being either too active or passive in these situations, the group leader needs to show balance in dealing with conflict. This means trying to let members settle disputes whenever possible but preventing them from becoming overwrought.

To accomplish balance, it is essential that leaders not be absent from the group during the transition stage. This is especially true for co-leaders who, if absent, may miss an opportunity for directly observing interpersonal dynamics. Such an absence handicaps the group process because members may not be given enough guidance or input by leaders on how to resolve their differences. A further complication of not being in the group at this critical time is that members may think they are not that important to the leader(s) and thus feel rejected (Korda & Pancrazio, 1989). In either of these cases, members are blocked physically or psychologically and must deal with another layer of frustration or anger. They may express their negative feelings on other group members or on themselves. In either case, these actions are self-defeating and activities that ensue hurt the group as a whole.

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doing, leaders need to be aware that they may be the target of criticism regardless of what actions are taken. By not being defensive, leaders can model an attitude of comfortableness that will encourage mutual sharing of concerns (George & Dustin, 1988). At the same time, by acting in an open manner, leaders will create an atmosphere where members will feel safe to express themselves.

Regardless of how it is done, the practice of getting feedback from the group allows members to focus on their intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics.

During the transition stage, it is also helpful for group leaders to ask the group for feedback periodically (Ponzo, 1991). This may be done in an unstructured or structured way. As an example of an unstructured style, the leader might say: "I would like to hear how you think the group is doing. Who would like to share?" A more structured way of eliciting feedback is to systematically "make the rounds," where each group member is asked to contribute an observation or thought about the group.

Regardless of how it is done, the practice of getting feedback from the group allows members to focus on their intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics. By concentrating their energy in this way, members may become more aware of the dynamics underlying their ambivalence and conflicts. Furthermore, they may gain insight into ways of working through these periods of tension and turmoil.

Three other interpersonal skills essential to group leaders during the transition stage are: (a) active listening, (b) silence, and (c) linking.

Three other interpersonal skills essential to group leaders during the transition stage are: (a) active listening, (b) silence, and (c) linking. In active listening, leaders hear what is implied as well as what was literally said (Gladding, 1991). They become attuned to nonverbal messages as well. For example, if Kate says to the leader: "It bothers me when others don't talk," the leader may probe and ask Kate what others she is talking about (i.e., to whom she directing her message).

Silence is employed in a number of ways in groups. For instance, it can be used as a means to think about situations before making a statement about them (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988). Its presence is usually very apparent in most types of groups. By allowing the group some moments of silence, and even encouraging silence, leaders can get a better feel as to what is happening among the members when the silence is broken. If needed, leaders can set up procedures where silent members are given opportunities to speak. For instance, the leader may designate a time for members who have not said anything during a session to state what they are thinking or feeling.

The final skill group leaders are wise to employ during the transition stage is linking. This is the process of connecting others together. It gives members a sense of interrelatedness, which they need in order to feel more like a group and move into working as a group (Trotzer, 1989). An example of linking is when the leader notes to the group that two members share a similar background or the same interests.

Overall, it is essential that group leaders monitor the transition stage carefully and be active in helping the group work through it. This task can be accomplished by having another group specialist supervise the leader and give feedback on what he or she is doing and how it is working. There are a number of supervision models that can help in the achievement of this goal (Hayes, 1990).

Overall, it is essential that group leaders monitor the transition stage carefully and be active in helping the group work through it.

Balance and Structured Strategies for the Transition Stage

In order for the group to be successful, a sense of balance must be achieved by the end of the transition period. Balance can be conceptualized as the equalization between "I," "we," and "it" (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1989). The "I" encompasses the experience of each person; the "we" relates to the interpersonal connectedness of the group members, and the "it" refers to the theme or task of the group. If the group is harmonious, all three aspects of this triad will be

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given enough attention. If not, members and the group as a whole may have a less than satisfactory experience.

The job of creating and maintaining a steady balance is one that the leader, each member of the group, and the group as a whole must be ever mindful of achieving, collectively and personally.

Balance requires the employment of skills, such as those already described, while working in the transition stage of the group. The job of creating and maintaining a steady balance is one that the leader, each member of the group, and the group as a whole must be ever mindful of achieving, collectively and personally. "Traditional groups (e.g., the committee meeting or the classroom) pay too much heed to overt tasks without sufficiently encompassing the affective and interpersonal components of the group (e.g., who is angry? bored? excited?). In contrast, sensitivity groups give too much attention to the 'I' and the 'we' aspects of the group without giving enough structure and cognitive attention to the specific learning-agenda of the group" (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1989, p. 233).

In addition to the several ways already discussed to help the group achieve the goal of balance during the transition period, leaders may ask members to engage in structured exercises. These activities are collaborative in nature and require participants to focus on goals and interpersonal accomplishments (Dyer, 1977). There are several reasons for using these types of exercises in groups, including:

- to generate discussion and participation,
- to focus the group on a common topic,
- to deepen the group's focus,
- to provide an experience that is nonthreatening and fun, and
- to provide an opportunity for experiential learning (Jacobs, et al., 1988; Kees & Jacobs, 1990).

One strategy for effectively dealing with the transition period is called "perspective taking" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). Perspective taking is the ability to see another's point of view, summarize it accurately, and give feedback to the sender on one's agreement or disagreement with the ideas. In this procedure, the sender is not attacked personally and the views are not discounted or criticized; rather, the sender is given a clear message by the receiver(s) that he or she was heard.

In such an interchange, group members are able to see each other as people with diverse opinions. Stereotyped views of others break down and defensiveness is lowered. For example, Tom might say to Richard: "I've heard what you said about the importance of money but I don't agree with your position." Richard, in turn, might reply: "I understand that it is my position you disagree with and that you are not attacking me personally."

Another structured exercise that is fitting for the transition stage is called "Disagree." The rules for disagree are easy: The group divides in half, with each half, being given a name such as "the reds" or "the blues." Members of the two teams face each other. By a flip of a coin one member of the faced-off pairs will begin by making a statement that he or she is totally in disagreement with, such as: "I think vegetables are really bad for one's health." The member on the opposite team summarizes the message, such as: "You really believe that vegetables are bad for people." Then that member counters the statement with another point of view that is opposite of the sender. For instance, the receiver of the message might say something like "My experience is that vegetables keep you healthy and you should have four servings of them a day." The exchange then goes to the next pair, with the lead staying the same all the way down the line.

After the last pair has exchanged viewpoints, the exercise starts again. However, this time those who were receivers are now senders, and vice versa. After this second round of responses and feedback, discussion is held in the interacting dyads for three to five minutes and then in groups of four for the same amount of time. Afterwards, the group as a whole discusses the experience.

A...method for resolving issues and achieving balance in the transition stages involves giving the group an outside homework assignment.

A third method for resolving issues and achieving balance in the transition stages involves giving the group an outside homework assignment. The work assigned may vary but should show conflict within a group. A classic example is the film *Twelve Angry Men*, where a single juror holds out against his fellow jurors in a decision on a murder conviction. There are tense moments in the film as the jury becomes increasingly frustrated. Effective and ineffective ways of communicating with others are exemplified.

At the beginning of the group session that immediately follows the homework assignment, group members are asked to describe what strategies they saw and to comment on their effectiveness as helping strategies. When these ideas have been aired, the group is invited to relate good strategies used in the film to the present group. At the conclusion of the exercise, the group members discuss among themselves what behaviors they might display to overcome their present difficulties.

A fourth method used to achieve balance in the transition stage involves the playing of cooperative games. These activities require members of the group work with each other and thereby prevent individuals from withdrawing or fighting (Saidla, 1990). There are many games that can be played but only two, "Board" and "Ball," will be described here. The game of "Board" is literally a board game. Members are asked to play in two teams or in pairs a game such as checkers. The game of "Ball" is more physical. It involves the use of a prop such as a nerf basketball, and members of the group face off against one another to score baskets.

In both games member teams compete for points and advantages for about ten minutes. Then they "cool down" for a similar amount of time and discuss what they saw happening and how they are feeling. The game is then begun again but this time the rules are changed. Members of both teams are instructed to help each other score points. This type of help can come in any form a team wants to give, from verbal suggestions to supportive behaviors. During the second "cool down" period the cooperative experience is discussed among members of the group as a whole. Comparisons with the competitive part of the exercise are made and the group examines the changes that occurred in their group as a result of these two experiences.

A fifth strategy for dealing with conflict and promoting balance in the transition period is teaching. Sometimes members in a group lack the life skills to cope with perceived criticism or negative feedback (Gazda, 1989). A way to resolve this problem is to instruct them through personally modeling appropriate behaviors (Korda & Pancrazio, 1989; MacDevitt, 1987). For instance, a group member may say something negative about the leader. Instead of reacting defensively to the criticism, the leader may reflect on it aloud or silently. In doing so, the explicit or implicit message is "What can I learn from this experience?" The answer may result in gaining additional insight but, regardless, it helps to deflect conflict. The group leader then discusses with group members ways of responding to others, such as using positive feedback before resorting to the use of negative feedback (Stockton & Morran, 1981) and being specific and encouraging.

A sixth way of resolving conflict in the group and simultaneously promoting cohesion and balance is to play a self-revelation game such as "socks" (Brandler & Roman, 1991). In socks, members of a group stand in a circle; the leader starts the group by explaining that when he or she throws a rolled up pair of socks to another person, that person must reveal some nonthreatening information about himself or herself such as "I was born in Atlanta, Georgia," or "I have seven brothers and sisters." The idea is that the socks should be thrown around the group a minimum of three times in order to help members make connections with one another. The members then sit down and discuss how it feels to talk about themselves and how comfortable they may feel about voicing their opinions in the group.

A final technique to use is called "draw it all better" (Mills & Crowley, 1986). In this exercise, members of the group, either individually or collectively, draw symbols that represent their feelings or those of the group at present. They then draw symbols that show the group "all better." In between these two drawings they are asked to conceptualize and draw a picture of connectors to get from the first drawing to the second. For instance, the first picture of a group might represent "frustration" and show lightning bolts and distance between members who are frowning, with rocks in the background and foreground.

The second picture of the group feeling "all better" might be labeled "content" and show group members with arms around each other and in a circle having built a monument. The last picture might show the connectors such as people talking to each other, individuals helping each other, a person giving directions, and everyone looking over a map of how to build a project.

If used correctly, structured strategies can complement the skills of group leaders and members and help the group help itself. These exercises should never be arbitrarily employed but should only be used in concert with other regular group leadership skills and techniques.

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Summary

In completing the transition stage successfully, group members gain experience and skills to help them express their feelings and work together cooperatively that will serve them well in the future. This is especially true when members learn that it is possible to disagree with one another without aggressive consequences.

If the transition stage develops ideally, group members will leave it feeling stronger and more open to themselves and others. They will have acquired the skill of knowing they can be self aware and self expressive without hurting others or being hurt in return. They also learn to appreciate the differences, as well as the similarities, in other group members. This process is affected by clarity of communication, group rules, and the personalities of members.

Group leaders need to help the group achieve a sense of balance by the end of this stage. Leaders also need to be actively involved with the group during this time. If leaders are non-attentive or become passive, the group as a whole suffers. Therefore, leaders should be open, nondefensive, and use such skills as active listening, silence, and linking. These qualities will help them stay in touch with their own feelings and monitor the progress of group members.

There are many strategies for working through this stage of the group. Some of these ways of working involve the employment of structured exercises discussed here such as: perspective taking, the playing of cooperative games, video homework assignments, and teaching through role modeling and didactic instruction. Once a group gets through the stormy period of transition, it can then get down to work.

Once a group gets through the stormy period of transition, it can then get down to work.

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Chapter 7

Working in a Group

You speak to me and through your words
I am challenged to change my perceptions
to set aside views as if they were toys
I'd outgrown or no longer needed.
I have to work hard when I give up old habits
for like a child I'm still unsure
what I'll receive in return
and if its worth the risk.
But in the process of meeting you
I slowly begin to build anew.

—Gladding, 1993

The most productive part of a group is the working stage. This is the time in which group members endeavor to achieve their individual and collective goals. This stage is sometimes described as the performing or action period in the group process (Gross & Capuzzi, 1992). It is distinguished from other stages by its stability, commitment, and productivity. It is a time when group members interact freely with one another and take the initiative in accomplishing the purposes of the group (Forsyth, 1990).

Before a group can begin to work, it must have successfully resolved earlier stages of group development. Getting group members to work requires that they have settled issues and uncertainties about trust and relationships with other group members. Individuals must have satisfactorily dealt with intrapersonal

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and interpersonal conflicts. Resistance must be history, and members must be in a frame of mind to achieve results. This is a time of purposefulness in the group, where sharing and constructive ideas dominate and where a final pleasing product should emerge (Corey & Corey, 1992).

In this chapter, different aspects of the working stage will be examined. Specific topics to be covered include: (a) dynamics and characteristics of groups in the working stage, (b) factors that effect the completion of this stage, (c) the task of group leaders, (d) goals for group members, and (e) strategies that help the group as a whole work.

Dynamics and Characteristics of Groups in the Working Stage

Groups in the working stage have much in common, regardless of their original purposes. For one thing, the length of time they devote to achieving results is relatively long (Maples, 1988; Tuckman, 1965). In task groups, the working stage may represent 60 to 80 percent of the group's meeting time, while in counseling groups the time is likely to be 40 to 50 percent.

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For this stage, successful groups can be characterized by the attitudes and feelings of their members:

- a sense of trust in themselves, others, and their leaders;
- a feeling of being a valued part of the total group;
- a willingness to risk ideas and be fully known;
- a feeling of hopefulness; and
- an awareness of power (Corey & Corey, 1992).

These emotions are complemented by the mechanics of the group processes that occur during this stage. Members of groups in the working stage concentrate on:

- achieving personal or professional goals;
- focusing on the present as well as on long-range tasks;
- concentrating effort toward communicating clearly;
- relying on one another for ideas and feedback; and
- sharing responsibility and leadership (Corey & Corey, 1992).

Overall, this is a stage characterized by group involvement and enhancement. The activities that occur within the working stage of a group "involve blending, merging, and moving from independence to more interdependence." In these processes "individuality is not lost but instead becomes enmeshed in the group" (Gross & Capuzzi, 1992, p. 30).

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Factors that Affect the Completion of this Stage

Even though the working stage of a group is noted for its productivity, the success of the group may be deterred if problems arise with members or processes. Each of these factors will be considered separately although in reality they are usually interactive.

Problem Behavior

Problem behavior may surface at any time. An individual may attempt to take over and control the proceedings (Smith & Steindler, 1983). For example, if one group member is verbally attacked by another, he or she may respond by withdrawing or counterattacking in such a way that the group's agenda is lost and chaos ensues (Kline, 1990). Among the behaviors most likely to disrupt the group are:

monopolizing time, interrupting, storytelling, intellectualizing, and continuously questioning. These behaviors are most problematic if they occur in a repeatable and predictable pattern. In such cases, they become critical incidents in the life of the group that require intervention (Cohn & Smith, 1976; Kottler, 1983).

A number of interventive strategies can be used to rectify these disruptions. One strategy is for the group leader to take the initiative in correcting problem behaviors; this response assumes that "it is the leader's task to make interventions so that some members do not sap the energy of the group and make it difficult for others to do productive work" (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993, p. 345). If the leader takes this role, it is up to him or her to be constructive in the process.

The first thing for leaders to do in order to be successful in such endeavors is to rely on self-monitoring to identify issues to which they may have an emotional response (Friedman, 1989; Gazda, 1989). Thus, group leaders would ask themselves questions about the nature and intensity of their feelings about what is happening in the group. They would also verify what they are observing by listening to the reactions of others and by asking thoughtful questions to probe for the reasons behind any display of troublesome behavior. Finally, they assess what specific intervention they can make and how effective that action is likely to be.

After leaders assure themselves that they can act fairly and objectively, they concentrate on rectifying problems in a number of ways. For instance, if a group member generalizes and uses "we" instead of "I" in describing thoughts and feelings, the leader can ask that the member speak from the "I" position. The leader might say: "Ann, I have noticed that when you are talking about your emotions, you consistently state that 'we feel' instead of 'I feel.' I would like for you to substitute the word 'I' for 'we' from now on."

Similarly, if a member tells stories, intellectualizes, or monopolizes conversation in the group, the leader may ask group members to provide feedback on how they feel when this type of behavior occurs. In such a circumstance, the leader might say: "Jeff, you act as if you would like to contribute to the group but you always seem to get cut off by Ashley. I wonder if you could tell her what you feel about this behavior. I would like for other members of the group to discuss what they see, too, in regard to Ashley's actions."

It is vital that group leaders use the power of the group as well as their own abilities in resolving any problematic behaviors during this stage. The difference in this kind of an approach is between being less authoritative and more democratic: Peers have a powerful influence on each other.

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Problem Processes

Problems can arise in the way a group operates and can involve anything from a lack of clarity regarding group rules to the projection of blame on others when a goal is not met. Usually, these difficulties are easier to deal with and rectify than those associated with individual members. For instance, if members are unclear as to what the rules of the group are, these regulations can be written down and handed out, or they can be openly discussed at a group session.

Groups tend to get into habits of conduct, and so, over time, it becomes less and less likely that processes will be problematic. Also, over time, a group gels as a unit and forms a degree of cohesion, or "bonding" (Caple & Cox, 1989). The stronger the level of cohesion, the more likely group members will be to support one another and self-disclose (Yalom, 1985).

Misunderstandings, feedback, and corrective actions are more likely to occur in the beginning stages of the group than during the working stage. If problems in group processes do arise in the working stage, they are probably serious and may well jeopardize the way in which the group functions. One way of addressing them is by reviewing how they initially began and what aspects within the group keep them going. In such a way, the group can help itself by using the combined power of the group leader and members. After such an analysis, the group as a whole should brainstorm ways to resolve the problem (Evans & Lindsay, 1989). With brainstorming, the quality and quantity of ideas is increased, and the group has an opportunity to rely on its own resources. The group also increases its chances of getting back on track with the tasks before it.

Tasks for Group Leaders

In the ideal group, the tasks of group leaders are fewer during the working stage than in other stages because, as the group progresses, members become more comfortable and take greater responsibility for their actions and for the progress of the group as a whole.

In the ideal group, the tasks of group leaders are fewer during the working stage than in other stages because, as the group progresses, members become more comfortable and take greater responsibility for their actions and for the progress of the group as a whole. Group leaders during this stage have three main tasks: (a) to prevent problems, (b) to encourage team building, and (c) to refine goals.

Preventing Problems

The job of prevention within a group can be accomplished by leaders who employ basic skills as group facilitators. For instance, if group members begin to distance themselves from one another, leaders can use "linking" techniques to stress the common background attributes members share. Likewise, in order to prevent discord, leaders can stress group identity. If the group is off base in its emphasis on resolving a problem, leaders can suggest direction. Similarly, leaders can help members become involved in the group and act appropriately through sharing leadership, modeling, and reinforcing cooperation (Capuzzi & Gross, 1992).

Team Building

Team building, as discussed in Chapter 2, is the fostering of cohesion and interdependency in a group. "Team building in the workplace parallels team building in sports" (Forsyth, 1990, p. 104). In both cases, members must learn to set group goals, to coordinate their efforts with others, and to rely on the strength of individual members and of the team as a group. Simultaneously, they must successfully resolve areas of conflict.

"The productivity of teams is not a simple function of team members' technical competencies and task abilities" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 435). Rather, teams are built through the promotion of interpersonal interaction among members. Common and achievable goals are stressed along with the promotion of change. United teams show an adaptability among their members to meet the demands of the situations they face.

In business and industry, teamwork is called by many different names, including "employee involvement (EI), worker participation, and labor-management 'jointness.' Whatever it is called, teamwork is clearly troublesome for many Americans" (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, p. 435). In a society that gives its highest accolades to individual endeavors, it is not surprising to find that people—both inside and outside of business environments—are hesitant to work as part of a perceived functional unit.

In a society that gives its highest accolades to individual endeavors, it is not surprising to find that people—both inside and outside of business environments—are hesitant to work as part of a perceived functional unit.

Leaders can help people within groups overcome some of their reluctance to work as a team by stressing win-win notions such as "when the team wins, individuals win." Baseball provides a good analogy: If a team wins the world series, its players receive recognitions and rewards both as a unit and as individuals. Groups whose leaders continually emphasize this type of systems approach seem to function more effectively and with greater cooperation (Matthews, 1992).

Refining Goals

The competent leader helps members to assess goal achievement and to set new goals as old ones are reached or are discarded as a result of what members learn about their interests, needs, and values within the group."

Refining goals is the last major task of group leaders during the working stage. "Goals serve as general guides and should not be limiting in nature. The competent leader helps members to assess goal achievement and to set new goals as old ones are reached or are discarded as a result of what members learn about their interests, needs, and values within the group" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990, p. 26).

Many group members work on goals outside of the group setting so they can discuss their progress with the group (Posthuma, 1989). However, other group members need or prefer to work on goals within the group—for example, by role playing bothersome situations. The feedback they receive and the progress they can document are two crucial means by which members can best determine if the goals they began with are still realistic and achievable. If members find they are not making as much progress as they had hoped, they may then modify their goals or their actions.

Goals for Group Members

Goals for group members are both personal and professional in nature. Particular goals are dependent on the type of group that is being conducted and the needs of specific members. However, there appear to be some goals for group members that are common to all groups. For instance, in either task or therapy groups, members' self-esteem should be enhanced as learning takes place—whether about a process or about oneself (Conyne, 1989). Likewise, gaining knowledge (about self, others, or objects) and learning how to give and receive feedback so it is heard and used are common goals for most group members (Stockton, Morran, & Harris, 1991).

One goal people within groups wish to attain is to keep their sense of personhood. This goal is achieved when members "recognize similarities and differences among themselves" (Brandler & Roman, 1991, p. 41). The goal is lost, however, if group members avoid critically discussing issues. When members become oriented toward simply agreeing with each other, the group as a whole becomes deeply involved in promoting unanimity and avoiding disagreement. This behavior makes them prone to engage in a destructive process known as "groupthink" (Janis, 1982). The manifestations of groupthink are that members lose autonomy, influence, and responsibility as individuals; they become a part of an anonymous group. At its worst this process "renders group members incapable of making a rational decision" (Forsyth, 1990, p. 294). Examples of groupthink include the "Bay of Pigs" decision under the Kennedy administration in the early 1960s and the tragic mass suicides of hundreds of followers of Jim Jones in the late 1980s.

The manifestations of groupthink [i.e., members always agreeing with one another] are that members lose autonomy, influence, and responsibility as individuals; they become a part of an anonymous group.

Overall, during the working stage, group members should be able to be honest with themselves and with others. They should also be more spontaneous than they were at the beginning of the group (Brandler & Roman, 1991). Furthermore, their feelings of belonging to the group and being a vital and valued member of it should increase. Integration of the self within the group as a valued contributor is a goal to which most members aspire and one that the majority do achieve (Gross & Capuzzi, 1992).

Strategies for Making the Working Stage Productive

During the working stage of the group, there are many strategies that group members and leaders can use to keep the group on track, to help keep the group productive, and to prevent stagnation:

1. *Providing adequate time.* As with the other stages of groups, the working stage takes time. Integrating new behaviors or feelings into one's actions or outlook is a process that is best accomplished over a number of sessions (Barnette, 1989). If the group tries to make changes too fast, the results will be less than desirable.

One way to check the progress of the group in this stage is to employ a group exercise called "Integration." In this exercise, members pass a stick around the circle, and each member in turn first grasps the stick in one hand and makes a simple statement about what he or she can remember being aware of when the group began and then grasps the stick with the other hand and says what is different now. For instance, a member might say: "I can remember being unsure of myself when I first entered this group. Now I feel as if I am among friends." This exercise can be repeated two or three times if the group is doing well.

Another way to help the group and its members be productive in the working stage is by using a pretend technique called "acting as if."

2. *"Acting as if."* Another way to help the group and its members be productive in the working stage is by using a pretend technique called "acting as if" (Adler, 1963). This is a nonthreatening form of play-acting that involves group members or the group as a whole acting in a way that is ideal but different from their usual behavior. However, since it actually requires that members behave in ways that they have only imagined before, it keeps the group or individuals moving and focused.

One variation of this technique for task or counseling groups is a group rehearsal: Members of the group write out scenarios on cards; each scenario briefly describes an event that could be crucial to the group's well-being if not handled well; then they discuss what each member of the group and the group as a whole would appropriately do to handle particular situations. After the discussion, members of the group go through a dress rehearsal of handling a new and relevant challenge for them. The cards with the situations are stacked and shuffled. The group leader picks cards at random and the group or individual members demonstrate good coping responses. Thus, when time for the real performance comes, the group and its members can be prepared.

3. *Giving feedback.* The use of appropriate feedback can be very constructive, while inappropriate feedback can take a toll. One method for developing constructive feedback is known as "Kentucky windage": Like frontier riflemen who must pause to consider the direction and strength of the wind and adjust their aim accordingly, group members use feedback techniques to help one another know when they are on target in working toward achieving specific goals.

In the working stage of a group, members can engage collectively or individually in helping each other adjust the aim of their goals through feedback. For instance, in a self-help group a member might state how he or she plans to help subordinates stay focused. As the member speaks, he or she outlines a plan in writing on a blackboard. Following the principle of Kentucky windage, other members give the presenter feedback as to what they think he or she needs to do in order to help his or her subordinates hit their targeted behavior.

In the working stage of a group, members can engage collectively or individually in helping each other adjust the aim of their goals through feedback.

4. *Setting time lines.* An old adage in life and in groups is that "you can't be promising forever, sometime you have to deliver." The working stage of the group is the time to deliver and be productive, to set time lines for accomplishing goals that have not

Time lines are basically guidelines for further work and achievement.

yet been achieved. For instance, a group member may have set a goal to learn to speak clearly and concisely. During the working stage of the group much may have been accomplished in regard to this goal, but the group member may not have reached the point where he or she is satisfied. In such a case, setting time lines for completing the goal will be helpful. Time lines are basically guidelines for further work and achievement.

The diversity within a group should be acknowledged and highlighted to help the group as a whole become more productive.

5. *Acknowledging and using the strength of diversity.* Group members and groups have both universal and unique qualities. The diversity within a group should be acknowledged and highlighted to help the group as a whole become more productive. Too often, differences are seen as divisive; in groups, they are essential. The group needs the talent of all members. If individuals feel their contributions are not valued they will be less likely to contribute to the overall quality of the group as a whole. Both these individuals and the group will suffer as a result.

One way to emphasize the importance of diversity within the group is to use an exercise called "brag and bag." In this activity, group members are asked to take a minute to write down as many of their own productive qualities as possible. Individuals are then asked at random to recite these assets to the group, and then to elaborate. For instance, a member may state that among her better qualities is a sense of genuinely caring for people; rather than let the comment pass, the group may ask her to tell them how she has cared for someone.

After all members have had an opportunity to read their list, they are then asked to write down qualities they heard others voice that are beneficial to them. Finally, members are requested to talk about this second group of qualities and which of these behaviors would be helpful to them and to the group in accomplishing specific goals.

Summary

The working stage of a group is characterized by action, performance and accomplishment. It is a time when group members, both individually and collectively, focus on achieving the goals they outlined earlier. The group is purposeful and constructive during this period. The result of this stage is the emergence of a product or outcome that is useful for all involved.

The working stage of a group is characterized by action, performance and accomplishment.

During the working stage, members generally share freely with each other. They are open to their own feelings and empathic to those of others. Members trust themselves and others, are hopeful, and take risks. If the group is going well, its members become more interdependent, yet they do not lose their own identity.

A working group can be stymied by problems, however. One of these is dealing with any members who attempt to take over the group and disrupt the group process by displaying inappropriate behaviors. Among the most annoying of these actions are monopolizing time, interrupting, storytelling, intellectualizing, and continuously questioning. It is up to the group leader, in concert with group members, to make appropriate and constructive interventions to end such problem behavior. Giving feedback and modeling new behaviors are two ways to do this; having group members work as a team and brainstorm solutions to difficulties is usually successful in resolving them, too. In working together to deal with such problems, the group becomes even more cohesive and productive.

The tasks of group leaders are fewer in the working stage than in other stages of the group. Leaders primarily work to keep the group focused and help it function as a team. They also assist group members in refining goals. In contrast to group leaders, members are quite active during this stage. It is during the working stage of the group that they try out new behaviors and work with others to achieve common and individual goals. There are numerous exercises members can utilize in this process.

Overall, the working stage of a group is a busy time. Leaders and members can help make it more productive through concentrating on refining goals and time frames for achieving those goals, rehearsing new actions by "acting as if," giving each other constructive feedback, and acknowledging and utilizing the strength inherent in the diversity of the group.

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Chapter 8

Terminating a Group

Saying "good-bye" is bittersweet
as it marks the start of transition.
So I prefer to say "good day"
or let departures pass in silence.
Yet in bidding a final farewell to the group
I am freed to create new "hellos."

—Gladding, 1993

Successful groups have clear and appropriate endings. Most groups cannot and should not be conducted on a continuous basis. A major job for any type of group is to be productive and finish its work. Yet, if a group experience is meaningful and enjoyable, the loss its members may feel at its conclusion is significant. There is a need for readjustment to life without the group (Brandler & Roman, 1991). A general rule of thumb is that as much attention should be paid to the termination stage as to its formation.

Upon the completion of the group, members scatter. However, before this occurs "the termination phase of the group provides an opportunity for members to clarify the meaning of their experience, to consolidate the gains they've made, and to make decisions about the new behaviors they want to carry away from the group and apply to their everyday lives" (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 1993, p. 343). A common experience group members share is their

..."the termination phase of the group provides an opportunity for members to clarify the meaning of their experience, to consolidate the gains they've made, and to make decisions about the new behaviors they want to carry away from the group and apply to their everyday lives."

input into the development of the group and its collective influence. Individually, they may remember their part in the group and what they learned about how they themselves interact with others.

Too often group leaders neglect the termination phase of a group and make the end of the group abrupt "without much processing of termination issues."

Members appreciate closings that "help them generalize their learning" and move on to new challenges (Waldo, 1987, p. 203). Too often group leaders neglect the termination phase of a group and make the end of the group abrupt "without much processing of termination issues" (Gazda, 1989, p. 307). This hurried type of closure is a mistake.

In this chapter different aspects of termination will be considered including: (a) the transition from the working stage of the group to the termination stage; (b) issues involved in termination, including loss, reflection, and celebration; (c) barriers to termination; (d) ways of terminating a group; and (e) the importance of follow-up. As in other chapters, practical exercises that can be used in the group during this stage are highlighted.

Making the Transition to the Closing Stage

One way to ensure a good ending is to outline at the start of the group a schedule members can follow in regard to group process.

The transition from the working to the closing stage of the group is one that must be planned and publicized. It is important that group members know what to expect, and when. One way to ensure a good ending is to outline at the start of the group a schedule members can follow in regard to group process (George & Dustin, 1988). For example, a task group may plan to work weekly on a project for as long as needed. On the other hand, a growth group may schedule only twelve sessions and concentrate on achieving personal goals during a limited time period.

Once members are aware of the time span for their group meetings, they feel freer to make contributions during group sessions and initiate changes. They are better prepared mentally to end and say goodbye. Leaders can help the group in reaching a successful conclusion. The first way to ensure an appropriate finale is for the leader to concentrate on ending each individual group session as positively as possible. The leader can also help by focusing on the last few sessions of the group itself.

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Ending Individual Sessions

There are many ways to end individual group sessions. Regardless of which is chosen, certain goals should be accomplished. Loose ends should be tied up, a summary of what happened during the session should be made, and any assigned homework for the next session should be emphasized (Kottler, 1983). All of these activities need to occur in an unhurried manner so that group participants have time to readjust from the group setting to the wider world.

The amount of time needed to terminate a group meeting will vary but will generally range from one-sixth to one-fifth of the total time for that session (Gazda, 1989; Gladding, 1991). The leader can inform members when time is almost up by simply stating: "We have a few more minutes. Is there anything anyone wishes to say?" (Carroll & Wiggins, 1990, p. 52). Less time may be needed to terminate a task-oriented group session than would be needed to end a meeting of a group devoted to personal growth and development.

The amount of time needed to terminate a group meeting will vary but will generally range from one-sixth to one-fifth of the total time for that session.

One exercise a leader can utilize to bring about a successful ending of an individual group session is to get the group to do a "go-round" about 15 minutes before the scheduled time to terminate. In this activity, each member sums up what he or she has experienced in the group during that session and how that might affect preparation for future meetings. For example, Dave might say that he learned that his voice "is perceived by others to be pleasing" and for next session he will "plan to speak up."

Terminating the Overall Group Process

"In closed groups with a fixed life span, the issue of termination must be faced before the last session. Group members should be encouraged to express their feelings about the group's ending and to identify what more they want to do before the opportunity is gone" (Corey, Corey, Callanan, & Russell, 1992, p. 156). For example, in a counseling group, members may want to practice new skills within the group before it ends. In a task group, however, the concentration may be aimed more at refining new processes that have come to light during the group meetings.

Overall, the best way to motivate people for the termination of the group is to announce the planned end date far in advance and continue to give frequent reminders.

Overall, the best way to motivate people for the termination of the group is to announce the planned end date far in advance and continue to give frequent reminders. For instance, the group leader can say: "Today is our sixth session. We have five more times to meet before the group is over." Members who are well informed will usually make the most of the opportunities they have (Corey, et al., 1992).

Issues Involved in Termination

There are a number of issues involved in terminating a group. Some are quite practical—they center around what to do and how to do it. Other issues relate to emotional factors surrounding this event.

Loss

For individuals who have enjoyed the group experience or who have benefited from it, the final session of the group may lead to feelings of significant loss.

All terminations involve loss (Goodyear, 1981). The group is ending and will not meet again. For individuals who have enjoyed the group experience or who have benefited from it, the final session of the group may lead to feelings of significant loss.

Group leaders can help members deal with this sense of loss in two ways. First, they can foster interdependency among group participants from the start of the group and link individuals with one another (Covey, 1989). This promotes a win-win situation where members feel connected with each other both inside and outside the group. Second, group leaders can discourage dependence on themselves (Kottler, 1982). "As part of group leaders' role, they are to promote the autonomy of members and to help them transfer what they have learned in the group into their everyday lives" (Forester-Miller & Rubenstein, 1992, p. 314).

Reflection

Within groups people learn something about themselves, about others, and about processes. Sometimes these lessons are dramatically inscribed in their minds because of experiences they have in the group. At other times, group members may need time and prompting to remember and put into perspective what they have gained from being in the group.

Group leaders and members need to take time and effort to make sure they have an opportunity to recall significant moments in the group. They also need time to process what they have gained as a result of their experiences (Corey, et al., 1992). This process may simply mean allowing 5 to 10 minutes at the beginning or end of the last few sessions of the group for members to contemplate and share their thoughts and feelings about the group with fellow participants. Reflection can also take the form of homework, where members are asked to think in between group sessions about how they have been changed as a result of being in the group. They are then given "air time" in the next group session to express their thoughts.

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Finally, reflection may manifest itself as a transferable skill (Corey & Corey, 1992). In such a situation, individuals are requested to be specific in showing how what they have gleaned from the group can be applied to their daily lives, either inside or outside work and family settings. They may even be requested through a role play to show other members of the group how their behavior now differs from what it was when the group began (Jacobs, Harvill, & Masson, 1988).

Celebration

Since groups have a life of their own, that time together should be celebrated, and termination may be the most appropriate time for celebrating, whether focused on individual achievements or on the attainment of group goals. The celebration of change, however, should be in line with the purpose of the group. It is essential that there be something for everyone to commemorate on such an occasion. For instance, in any celebration there should be food and some activities that give participants a common experience to remember. For example, each member might receive a personalized tee shirt, button, photo, or some other type of memorabilia to keep as a momento of the group.

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In general, celebrations are times of relaxation and fun. Topics related to work should be temporarily dropped from conversation. Enjoying individual or collective achievements should be stressed. Structuring an environment that promotes a festive atmosphere is an essential part of celebrating the group's progress and achievements. Balloons, snack foods, banners, cakes, and confetti can all add to the fun of this final experience.

Barriers to Termination

There are several barriers to termination. One of the strongest is affective responses. Emotional and psychological bonds develop between group members, or between members and the group leader (Patterson & Eisenberg, 1983). In such cases, group members are reluctant to leave a group because they have a genuine liking for the people in it and consider them friends or colleagues.

Another barrier to termination is fear of facing the future (Cormier & Hackney, 1993). Groups give individuals support. When groups end, some members fear they will not be able to find others who will work with them and encourage them in the same way. These individuals are usually unaware of the behavioral principle of generalization, which basically states that what people learn to do with others in the group is transferable to similar situations.

A third reason for not wanting to terminate a group is that such an event signals the end to a learning experience (Goodyear, 1981). Many individuals learn for the pure enjoyment of it. Within most groups there are people who gain considerable insight into themselves and others. To end a group means to cut out of people's lives a source of predictable stimulation and enjoyment; some individuals are reluctant to leave groups because of this factor.

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Finally, a group may be delayed in ending because the leader is not prepared to terminate. Leaders get rewarded for being in charge and making things happen. When a group is running smoothly during its working stage, its leaders may be hesitant to see it stop (Gladding, 1991). In such situations, it is important for the leaders to seek out help from supervisors or colleagues in order to be sure that their actions do not hurt members or the group experience.

Ways of Terminating a Group

Termination should never be considered the highlight of a group or growth experience (Cormier & Hackney, 1993). Rather, termination should be seen as a natural conclusion to the life of a group, but one that should be handled carefully and sensitively.

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An important point to consider at this stage [ending of a group] is the "rationale for choosing a method of closure."

There are many techniques that can be employed in ending a group. Some are elaborate, but most are quite simple. An important point to consider at this stage is the "rationale for choosing a method of closure" (Kottler, 1983, p. 84). The rationale should be complementary with the goals of the group. In a task group, for example, the leader may briefly thank those who participated, give each member some kind of token of support and appreciation (such as a button or a certificate), and dismiss the group. For other types of groups, termination is a time for reflection and celebration of achievement that requires more planning and a formal closure. Regardless of the type of group, some objective has usually been reached. In order to launch the project or recognize the change, group members and the group as a whole need an event to cap off and commemorate the experience.

One way to celebrate the end of a group is through written exercises. Writings done in this way can take many forms, but the expression of a message is what is crucial. One form of writing is called the "Good-bye Book," where individuals, together in a group, literally sign off on the closure of a group. For example, all members would sign a copy of the report they have produced, just as they would sign a high school annual. Or it might take the form of group members writing an impression or a note of celebration to one another in regard to personal goals obtained. The importance of the exercise is that it ritualizes the experience of termination. Further, it makes achievements and congratulations concrete and positive.

"Fast forward" is another practical way to help group members help themselves. In this exercise, group members pretend they have a video camera and are filming the rest of their lives. However, instead of filming life in chronological order, the group members start with the closing successful scene and then work backwards. The process is like putting a video tape on "fast forward" and seeing the conclusion first. After seeing the final scene, it is relatively easy to work one's way back to important critical decisions that made the difference in success. For example, a member of a task group who has been promoted at the end of his "video," might tell others in the group that the way he or she achieved this goal was to run successful cooperative groups where the group as a whole was rewarded and the work of the group led to promotions for all its individual members. In a counseling group, the final scene might involve having a good relationship with a family member from whom one has been estranged. In such a situation, the group member might show how he or she worked with that relative through numerous conversations to reestablish contact and friendship.

Writing "closing lines" is a third way to end a group. These lines can be completed in one of two ways. In the first variation, each member of the group writes a line about what he or she has learned or experienced in the group. For example, using the metaphorical stem "In this group I learned..." members might write: "to value other's opinions," or "to work with others more cooperatively," or "to look at how groups and life work." When the words are combined they make a statement about the power of the group collectively and individually.

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In the second alternative, all members write about one another using positive and common descriptors. For instance, members might describe each other as animals, trees, or houses. In any of these cases, the leader might supply a beginning line, such as: "This group has a life of its own." The next step is to talk with group members about animals, trees, or houses they admire and the reasons why. From this initial structure, members can construct their closing lines about other group members. They may supply their own ending or finish with a line supplied by the group leader, such as: "So that is the life of the group."

A fourth way to terminate a group is to "sign off" on it: Members create a booklet that highlights the best aspects of their group experience. The booklets are duplicated in either plain or elaborate ways. Then group members sign each others' booklets the way high school students sign annuals. This exercise is fun and yet stresses the fact that the group's work has ended.

The group's final activity is the follow-up, conducted a few months to a year after the group has ended.

A last way of ending a group is to have group members make calenders of when they will try certain actions they have planned while working with the group. The calender is filled in with expected "risk events," "reflective times," and "red letter days." Group members should give titles to their calenders, such as "Great Expectations," and make a commitment to share what they actually have done in regard to the calender during a group follow-up reunion.

Follow-up

The group's final activity is the follow-up, conducted a few months to a year after the group has ended. Follow-up activities "are both ethically and legally important and can be particularly useful to both the former group member and the leader" (George & Dustin, 1988, p. 107).

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The follow-up helps to assure group members of their leader's concern that they be able to transfer group learning to real life. Members further realize in the process that the leader wants to make sure that they can function individually without the support of the group. A third reason behind follow-up is to obtain information from members about the long-lasting effects of particular group experiences over time (Ponzo, 1991). The effectiveness of the group leader and what he or she did that made a difference is assessed also (Gazda, 1989).

Follow-up can take many forms, from a phone call or individual contact between a member and the leader to a personalized letter or questionnaire (Gladding, 1991). One form of follow-up does not necessarily have an advantage over the others except in the personalization of the process and the concreteness of the information that is obtained. Therefore, the style of follow-up is dependent on how much time a group leader has to dedicate to this activity and to the needs of members.

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Once the follow-up process is completed, the feedback can be used to help or reinforce members in what they are doing. Leaders can also use the information received during this last group process to improve how they run their next groups. For instance, if former members say that the group leader was too busy with agenda items and appeared unconcerned with them as people, the leader can plan to talk more extensively with group members and be less task oriented in future groups. The leader can then model these skills with peers and supervisors to insure that they appear genuine and are effective.

Although termination is one of the shorter stages within a group, it is one of the most difficult.

Summary

Although termination is one of the shorter stages within a group, it is one of the most difficult. In this stage, group members and leaders need to detach from each other affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively. Such a process is not easy, especially if the group has been or is being successful. Members and leaders may have a number of issues to work through and barriers to overcome before they can successfully leave each other in a positive and productive fashion.

To help the group collectively and individually, leaders and members must prepare themselves ahead of time for termination.

To help the group collectively and individually, leaders and members must prepare themselves ahead of time for termination. They need to concentrate on ending individual group sessions successfully. They should also downplay termination as the highlight of the group experience. Furthermore, they should arrange for the group as a whole to celebrate its ending and to help members give each other ways to remember what they have learned, such as by distributing token gifts or certificates. Members should be reassured and reinforced in realizing that what they have gleaned from the group is transferable to other settings.

Members should be reassured and reinforced in realizing that what they have gleaned from the group is transferable to other settings.

Overall, termination is a crucial event in the life of any group. It should be completed by having a follow-up of the group three to six months after the last group session. At such a time, group members can learn more from each other about the progress each has made since the group ended. During follow-up, the group members can rededicate themselves to achieving their personal or professional goals.

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Group 9

Group Exercises

The group moves with a common motion
like a willow tree blown by March winds.
I am touched and swayed by its growth,
influenced by ideas and sounds,
yet deep inside, amid the motion,
I am still secure.

—Gladding, 1993

Group leaders and members sometimes need and enjoy a structured way to begin or end sessions. Some groups benefit from selective experiences during the different stages of their development as well. At these times, group exercises may be useful to group leaders and to the group as a whole. Group exercises are called by many names, from "games" (Gazda, 1989) to "creative techniques" (Jacobs, 1992).

Group leaders and members sometimes need and enjoy a structured way to begin or end sessions.

Advantages of Using Group Exercises

Regardless of the name, structured experiences are meant to enliven the group and help members gain insight into themselves and others.

Regardless of the name, structured experiences are meant to enliven the group and help members gain insight into themselves and others. According to Jacobs (1992, pp. 3–5) creative techniques do all or some of the following:

1. *Making concepts more concrete.* Concreteness is conveyed to group members by showing them

what an experience is really like. For instance, if some members are constantly talking without focusing, the leader can bring in a small cup and begin to fill it with a bag of sand. In the process, the sand will eventually spill out and fall on the floor. As the leader should clearly explain, this concrete metaphor demonstrates that group members can only process so much material at a time; words are like sand in filling up space, and people are like cups in that they can absorb just so much.

Props, such as chairs or rubber bands, can be used to heighten awareness—to demonstrate to group members how and where they see themselves in relation to others.

2. *Heightening awareness.* Props, such as chairs or rubber bands, can be used to heighten awareness —to demonstrate to group members how and where they see themselves in relation to others. Props may help show feelings like tension, as well. An example of the latter phenomenon can be seen in the transition stage of the group, where members are "storming"; individuals may be asked to stretch a rubber band out to indicate to others how tense they feel about relating to someone in the group or interacting with the group as a whole.

Group exercises can have the impact of drama when they are employed properly.

3. *Dramatizing a point.* When drama is effective, it emphasizes a feeling or thought that had previously been dormant. Group exercises can have the impact of drama when they are employed properly. For instance, if the group is really working and there is a lull at the end of the session, the leader may ask members to think of themselves as a machine: They can show through enactments how they work together, with different members playing various parts. This type of exercise can be fun and enlightening, dramatizing a specific point about the effectiveness of groups.

4. *Speeding up the process.* Groups work at different speeds, and sometimes they get bogged down or stuck. Creative exercises can help recharge groups at these times. For instance, if group members continue to talk from an historical perspective, the leader can ask them to all join hands and walk backwards.

After they awkwardly complete this exercise, the leader can then ask them to again join hands and this time walk forwards. The group can then examine what happened in the exercise and how that is analogous to what the group has been experiencing in recent sessions. Such a procedure can assist them in focusing and concentrating their attention on the present.

5. *Enhancing learning through visualization.* The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words can be a useful one to remember when working with groups. When individuals can see drawings representing their role in the group or how they stand in relationship to others, they often learn something about themselves and about interpersonal interactions. Not everyone learns best through seeing but, for those who do, creative exercises work well.

6. *Enhancing learning through experience.* An event or process experienced directly or first-hand is quite often more memorable than one learned about second-hand through retelling. Jacobs (1992) says, for example, that clients who are constantly talking but not changing may be helped by this exercise: They are asked to move their chairs across a room while holding on to them and staying seated; the point is indelibly made through this experience that progress is difficult without change.

Potential Disadvantages of Using Group Exercises

Group exercises can have drawbacks, too. Gazda (1989, p. 70) lists a number of potential problems. Among these are:

1. *Overuse.* Creative exercises can be overdone and, when that happens, they turn people off, and the group experience becomes just a series of games. It is important to remember that effective groups focus on

the needs of their members and of the group as a whole. Therefore, creative group methods should be used judiciously.

2. *Loss of control.* When conducting creative group experiences, leaders need to be aware that some members may become overinvolved in an exercise. When this happens, it is to the detriment of the participants and the group as a whole. Creative group experiences should generally be brief and should carry minimum risk. Members should always have the option not to participate. If possible, these experiences should come at the beginning of the group session, and not at the end, so that group members have enough time to process and reflect on what they have learned during the exercise. When group activities are employed at the end of a session, they should be positive, and enough time should be allowed for discussion and to talk about follow-up.

Creative group experiences should generally be brief and should carry minimum risk. Members should always have the option not to participate.

3. *Questionable ethical practices.* Ethics are at the heart of group practice. The Association for Specialists in Group Work (1989) has established ethical guidelines for conducting various types of groups. Two of the subsections of these guidelines deal with coercion or pressure and the use of techniques. In accordance with these guidelines, leaders should be sensitive to implied coercion and active in preventing the group from placing undue peer pressure on a member to conform to a group activity, regardless of how creative the activity may be. Leaders must also take measures to be sure that the procedures they use are grounded in theory and that they have been well-trained in their presentation.

Creative group experiences can contribute to the neglect of the group by its leader; instead of fine turning his or her interpersonal relationship skills, the leader merely relies on group exercises.

4. *Leader apathy or neglect of responsibility.* Most people know someone who holds a responsible position but does not act in a responsible manner. Creative group experiences can contribute to the neglect of the group by its leader; instead of fine turning his or her interpersonal relationship skills, the leader merely relies on group exercises. Responsible group leaders consider creative activities to be like

seasoning on food—a touch usually enhances the flavor, but too much ruins the meal.

Guidelines for Selecting Group Exercises

In selecting group exercises, leaders must consider when they will use these techniques, with whom, for what purpose, and how. The three primary uses for employing group exercises are "(1) to initiate, (2) to facilitate, and (3) to terminate" (Trotzer, 1989, p. 424).

The three primary uses for employing group exercises are "(1) to initiate, (2) to facilitate, and (3) to terminate."

Regardless of when they are chosen, selected activities will work best if they are chosen because of their "purpose, relevance, and desired outcome" (Trotzer, 1989, p. 432). The impact of an activity is especially crucial. Exercises that do not lead the group into a new dimension of awareness or accomplishment are virtually useless. For example, if a leader instructs group members to "Cluck like a chicken," the individuals involved need to see a tangible and productive outcome. Otherwise, the leader has laid an egg. In short, group exercises should highlight, rather than bypass, natural group processes (Ettin, 1989).

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Group activities should also have a conceptual framework. They should be based on a theoretical perspective so that the group members can ultimately see and understand them in perspective. This is a responsible practice that can keep group leaders out of legal trouble as well (Paradise & Kirby, 1990).

A third criteria for choosing activities, according to Trotzer (1989), is to select exercises "that are familiar and comfortable for you to use" (p. 432). If a leader is uncomfortable with an activity, it shows. Group exercises that work best have been practiced by the leader beforehand and are ones that can be enthusiastically and easily presented.

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Another guideline for selecting activities relates to their names. Exercise labels may help some members to resist or avoid involvement. They may say that they do not like to do "psychodrama," "sociodrama," "role plays," or "pretend exercises." Therefore, activities should be explained as simply and straightforwardly as possible. The absence of jargon will make the experiences more palatable and probably more powerful.

Creative Activities for Beginning a Group

Creative efforts at the start of groups must be non-threatening and inviting.

Creative efforts at the start of groups must be non-threatening and inviting. If projects are complicated or involve risk taking, members will not respond because they are still struggling with the question of how much they can trust the group. Several creative exercises can help break down barriers and build rapport. Two of the best are as follows.

"Bags"

The purpose of "bags" is to familiarize group members with ways of understanding and communicating how it feels to be unique. This exercise is intended to help members identify with each other and to establish rapport. Bags arouses minimum anxiety and encompasses a variety of art work that looks like what people expect, i.e., published pictures that appear in professional publications. In order to make this creative process successful, group leaders must supply members with a variety of used magazines, newspapers, and postcards, as well as scissors, tape, and glue. If they wish, leaders may also provide other objects that can be used to represent interpersonal connections, such as string, nuts, cotton balls, and rubber bands.

The bag exercise is introduced by the group leader as an activity that focuses on getting to know oneself and others. The leader gives each member of the group a lunch bag and these instructions: "Cover the outside of your bag with pictures that represent information you feel comfortable in sharing. On the inside of the bag, place pictures or objects that represent your more private and sensitive side. These pictures represent material you do not wish to share with the group now but which you realize are a part of you." Group members then cut out pictures, which they glue or paste on their paper bags along with representative objects.

The next step is an initial round of introductions. Participants share outward aspects of themselves that they feel comfortable about. They bring their bags to future sessions of the group and in these meetings share any inward pictures they feel comfortable sharing at that time. Members are free to share as much or little as they wish throughout the life of the group.

"Walking"

The purpose of this creative movement is to energize and build empathy among group members at the start of a group. Participants walk in a circle at their normal pace and cadence. After they get a feel for how they walk, they are asked to walk faster than usual and then to walk in slow-motion.

Walking is linked to feelings, so group members are asked to walk as if they were tired, happy, sad, frightened, elated, or discouraged. After they walk through these emotions, members are instructed to act as if they were walking on or through different terrains. These surfaces include real geographical features or substances that individuals might encounter such as a dessert, a mountain, mud, ice, and shallow water; they may even include silly substances such as peanut butter, whipped cream, yogurt, play dough, newspapers, chocolate, and corn flakes.

After the walk is completed (usually through pretending to walk through a grassy meadow and arrive home), participants and the leader talk about the exercise. Members are encouraged to share with one another, not just with the leader. They are instructed to relate part of what this experience was like with past events in their lives. The leader tries to link members together wherever possible.

Creative Activities for Middle Sessions of Groups

The least likely time to use creative activities in groups is during a group's middle stages, because the group is hard at work at these times.

The least likely time to use creative activities in groups is during a group's middle stages, because the group is hard at work at these times. Members are usually concentrating on their goals and are self-motivated. Nevertheless, there are occasions when creative exercises may appropriately be employed during the middle stages, and two that can be used effectively are "home spot" and "roads."

"Home Spot"

"Home spot" is a creative activity that involves movement and manipulation. It is a nonverbal experience that is appropriate for groups in the forming or transition (or storming) stages. Its purpose is to help group members better understand group interaction.

The group leader instructs individuals to join hands and then pick out a spot in the room where they wish to try to maneuver the group. They are not to speak or give any other type of instructions. They then begin to move the group toward their spot when instructed. The activity is terminated after the group has had a time to struggle (approximately two to five minutes).

The ongoing group dynamics are the primary focus of the discussion that follows this exercise. Members are asked to give each other feedback on the feelings they experienced during the activity, such as frustration or elation. They are then asked to relate these feelings to similar emotions they may have had at other times either inside or outside of the present group.

"Roads"

The metaphor of roads can be used during the middle, or working, sessions of groups. This is an auditory (or listening) activity that can be combined with visual and musical components. The idea behind roads is to help group members focus on the direction they and the group are taking. This creative exercise is meant to bring group members into greater awareness about the choices they have in the group and in life.

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Roads requires that the group leader obtain and selectively play a number of road songs. There are literally dozens of such songs to choose from, such as Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again," the Beatles' "The Long and Winding Road," or the folk song "You Take the High Road and I'll Take the Low Road." Songs should be chosen in line with the background and theme of the group. The activity should also be introduced by the leader in such a way that members know they are being given an opportunity to focus in a different direction. For instance, the leader might say: "Today I want to begin the group by playing a few road songs. As a group, it appears to me that we are moving a lot, but I am not sure I see where we are headed. I would like for you to listen to these songs and see if any of them strike a cord in your mind about the group or even about yourself. When I've finished playing these songs, we will have a time to discuss what you think and feel."

Because of time constraints, the leader should play no more than three songs, and often one is enough. The leader then focuses with the group for the rest of the session on where they are headed collectively and individually. What they have done so far to get there is stressed, along with what they still need to do to achieve their objectives. If appropriate, the leader may ask members to draw or map out on a sheet of paper the directions they wish to travel from now on; this map would include where the group or individual has been, as well as future points. A variation on this exercise is to have members draw both ideal and expected futures. In any case, at the end of the session the leader should remind the group that in future sessions they will continue to check their focus, purposefulness, timeliness, and movement.

Creative Activities for Terminating Groups

The end of a group experience is one that leaders and members want to celebrate and remember, and using creative group activities may be the perfect way to cap such events.

The end of a group experience is one that leaders and members want to celebrate and remember, and using creative group activities may be the perfect way to cap such events. When done properly, these activities can help participants remember what occurred within the group and its importance. They can help members think of the group in a positive manner. Two interesting exercises that can be used during the termination stage are "Good-bye Booklets" and "The Last Roundup."

The "Good-bye Booklet"

The Good-bye Booklet is a way of expressing thoughts in a concrete way and highlighting meaningful experiences within the group. One of the best ways to construct the booklet is to ask group members in the next to the last session to jot down ideas about their most significant times in the group. After they have made these preliminary notes, they are to write a sentence or paragraph about the events and arrange them in chronological order. Each event is featured on a different page and the final booklet is stapled together.

In the last session of the group, members voluntarily read from their booklets. They are given an amount of time that is in line with the number of people in the group and the time limits of the session. It is best to allow some time at the end of the session for group interactions. Thus, if the group has nine members and meets for 90 minutes, each person will have an opportunity to read and reflect for about 7 or 8 minutes.

"The Last Roundup"

The name of this activity, "The Last Roundup," should not actually be used when introducing this creative activity since it may detract from the type of focus the leader wishes to emphasize. However, this title will be used here as a shorthand method of talking about the activity.

In this exercise, the leader asks each member to go around the group and give feedback to other group members. The feedback should consist of positive or neutral comments about what the other person has done in the group that has contributed to one's own growth or learning. Such statements might include: "I appreciate your encouragement of me," or "From you I have seen how to confront problems head on rather than deny them."

The idea behind this group exercise is to give members information they can use and build on. It makes covert thoughts overt. Furthermore, it allows members to leave the group with a good experience. Constructive follow-up from the group may be enhanced because of this last round of feedback. The exercise can be underscored even more if the actual words within the session are recorded on an audio tape so that copies may be later sent to each member, or if the feedback from each member is written down as well as spoken.

Summary

Creative group exercises are one way of helping groups become more energized and productive. They can be most appropriately used at the beginning and end of groups but are also appropriate during the main working stage of groups as well. By using creative exercises, members may become more aware of what they think and feel and acquire a common core of experiences to which they may relate.

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Creative activities are not without their drawbacks and potential liabilities, however. Leaders who use these techniques must be sure that the exercises are grounded in research and structured in a controlled manner. Individuals should always have the option to elect not to participate.

The exercises described here under the name of "walking" and "bags" are good ways to begin a group, while "home spot" and "roads" are quite appropriate for the middle phase of the group process. The "good-bye booklet" and the "last round up" are useful for groups in the terminating stage. Even though names have been used to identify creative exercises in this chapter, it might be counterproductive to use these names within the group because the names sometimes abet resistance.

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Chapter 10

Group Futures

I invest in groups on faith
making calculated risks each time
realizing that within the collective
growth occurs in many ways.
In that knowledge I reflect
amid the surprises of each session
In between the beginnings and endings
I build toward a future with others.

—Gladding, 1993

Like stock exchanges that try to profit from predicting the futures of commodities, nearly all individuals spend part of their lives trying to determine what tomorrows may bring.

Groups embody activities that have their own futures. Their exact shape and focus, and the circumstances under which they will be conducted, is not always knowable at any one point in time. However, in examining the past and the present some probable trends emerge. This brief chapter explores several likely paths groups will take in the 1990s and beyond.

With global knowledge expanding at a rapid rate, the need for learning groups is growing.

Learning Groups

With global knowledge expanding at a rapid rate, the need for learning groups is growing. Learning groups can take several forms, but essentially they comprise people who pool their knowledge for the good of others with whom they study, interact, or work. It is not unusual in medical, law, or business schools to find students forming such groups; indeed, the formation of learning groups is encouraged in these academic environments since it is virtually impossible for students who work alone to read and comprehend all of the material they are assigned.

Outside of school environments, learning groups have a future in business and community settings. In such groups, people with specialized knowledge can teach each other and become more informed. The result is a more democratic and cooperative work force or community environment. For example, in business settings, engineers, production workers, and sales personnel can form teams to share information on design, efficiency, and customer needs. The end product of such groups is usually more successful and marketable than if any of the subgroups just mentioned tries to operate independently.

Life Skill Groups

The demands of living change throughout the life span. Skills that may be appropriate and beneficial during one stage of life are ineffective and inappropriate at others. For instance, preschool children may benefit from being dependent and cute. However, young adults who display such behaviors may not only not get what they want, they may be psychologically ostracized by their peers. Therefore, learning new behaviors and ways of interacting is crucial to healthy growth and development.

Groups are an effective way to facilitate the development of life skills.

Groups are an effective way to facilitate the development of life skills. Through guidance, education, and orientation groups, people can learn how to relate to themselves and others within their environments most appropriately. In colleges and the military, new students receive information on how to get along in these particular environments. Couple-enrichment groups and parenting groups now help individuals who lack skills in these areas learn techniques for improving how they relate with their spouses and children. In homes for the aging and in foster care facilities, groups are now a major force and will continue to be in the foreseeable future; groups help people in such situations learn to adjust to transitional events in their lives and to relate appropriately. The end product of such effort is the achievement and maintenance of good physical and mental health.

Support Groups

Among the fastest growing types of groups are those that have been set up to foster support. Individuals who have struggled with unexpected or traumatic events can ventilate their thoughts and feelings and learn how to cope with the help of support groups. Support groups have proved to be especially useful in helping students to cope with the stresses associated with national calamities such as hurricanes and tornadoes (Walz & Bleuer, 1992). Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is the prototype of a support group. Its members range in age and experience, and new members are initiated and inducted into the group and the support system by those who are veterans of the group process. A unique feature of AA (and many support groups) is that when members have a special need they can call on sponsors or mentors who will help them at any time.

Among the fastest growing types of groups are those that have been set up to foster support.

Other support groups operate on a modified AA model. More experienced members are seen as more capable resources because they have lived through a particular type of life event, such as recognizing they have an addiction or unresolved grief. Since there are

Since there are numerous life experiences that are difficult for many people to cope with alone, support groups will continue to be a major form of helping.

numerous life experiences that are difficult for many people to cope with alone, support groups will continue to be a major form of helping. They provide a sense of community and enable their members to address problematic areas in their lives and to work through those problems.

Planning Groups

An old familiar saying is: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will do." Planning groups are those that have been set up to determine direction for associations and companies. They are charged with formulating strategic plans—like laying out new roads to follow—and building on them. Planning groups enable organizations to focus their attention on specific issues and not become sidetracked. Thus, the energy and efforts of individuals in the groups can be used most productively.

Planning groups are expected to become increasingly useful and important as people band together to systematically plan directions for themselves and others, to map out goals and formulas for reaching targeted objectives.

Planning groups are expected to become increasingly useful and important as people band together to systematically plan directions for themselves and others, to map out goals and formulas for reaching targeted objectives. For instance, in regard to clean air, a community group may initiate an effort to reduce pollution through a systematic series of steps to be implemented over time. Like other groups, planning groups go through a continuous process of envisioning goals, implementing strategies, receiving feedback, and revising objectives, and they can benefit everyone involved.

A cardinal rule in groups is that the more one gives of oneself to and within them, the more benefits one can derive from the group.

Summary

In all areas of life, the use of groups is growing and will continue to do so. Individuals can rely on a variety of groups to help themselves in a number of ways. A cardinal rule in groups is that the more one gives of oneself to and within them, the more benefits one can derive from the group. Thus, groups are enriched by their members and, in turn, enrich those who actively use them. Knowledge, skill, sensitivity, ability, and an enhanced self-concept are some of the major benefits to be derived from working in groups.

As you look into group futures, important questions to ask yourself are:

- What do I need?
- Where do I want to be?
- Who do I care to be with?
- How do I wish to grow?
- When do I desire to reach my goals?

In answering these questions, persons may pick out groups to participate in that will be most useful for them. In doing so, they will contribute to the health of others and to themselves. Their stock as people will rise and their futures will be more secure and ideal. Group futures are going up and taking with them those who are willing to invest. Ultimately, the secrets of conducting effective groups is in learning how they operate and then personally investing in them.

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Appendix A

ERIC/CASS

Educational Resources Information Center—ERIC

ERIC is a decentralized nationwide information system founded in 1966 and currently sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement within the U.S. Department of Education. It is the largest education related database in the world. ERIC is designed to collect educational documents and journal articles and to make them readily available through a number of products and services: the ERIC database, abstract journals, microfiche collections, online and CD-ROM computer searches, document reproductions, and information analysis publications. The ERIC audience is equally wide-ranging and includes teachers, counselors, administrators, supervisors, policy makers, librarians, media specialists, researchers, students, parents, and other educators and interested persons.

Counseling and Student Services Clearinghouse—CASS

CASS is one of the 16 subject-oriented clearinghouses of the ERIC system. CASS' exceptionally broad coverage includes K–12 counseling and guidance, post-secondary and adult counseling services, and human resource development in business, industry and government. Topics addressed by CASS are many and varied and include: preparation, practice and supervision of counseling professionals; career planning and development; marriage and family counseling; and services to special populations (substance abusers, students at-risk).

Appendix B

Selected CASS Publications

Crème de la Crème Series

Comprehensive Guidance Programs that Work by Norman C. Gysbers

Describes successful comprehensive guidance programs in eight school settings in six states. Includes practical suggestions for bringing about change in K–12 school guidance programs to make them truly comprehensive. *171 pp.*

Invitational Learning for Counseling and Development by William W. Purkey and John J. Schmidt

Explains how integrating the principles of invitational learning into guidance was a positive force for change in seven schools. An excellent approach for responding to students at risk and minimizing dropouts. *138 pp.*

The Teacher Advisor Program: An Innovative Approach to School Guidance by Robert D. Myrick and Linda S. Myrick

Describes six teacher advisor programs that creatively meet the developmental needs of middle and high school students. Many practical ideas and approaches. *125 pp.*

Learning Styles Counseling by Shirley A. Griggs

Prepares counselors K–12 to diagnose and infuse learning style approaches into their counseling. Useful in consulting with teachers on accommodating learning styles in the classroom. *161 pp.*

Empowering Young Black Males by Courtland C. Lee

Focuses on the empowerment model Dr. Lee has developed for assisting young Black males in acquiring skills which will enable them to cope effectively. Includes four training modules and useful resources. *95 pp.*

Effective Group Counseling by Samuel T. Gladding

Beautifully blends group theory and research with highly practical and useable group techniques. Both enhances a person's knowledge of groups and group counseling and provides them with a resource bank of eminently effective techniques for making group counseling effective. *166 pp.*

School Counseling Series (ASCA and ERIC/CASS)

Toward the Transformation of Secondary School Counseling by Doris Rhea Coy, Claire Cole, Wayne C. Huey and Susan Jones Sears, Editors

This compilation of original articles and the best from counseling journals provides a discussion of key concerns, issues and trends in secondary school counseling. Developmental guidance programs, teenage fathers, computer competency, the counselor's role in enhancing the school climate, and using career information with dropouts and at-risk students are some of the topics included in the eight chapters and 35 articles. *393 pp.*

The Challenge of Counseling in Middle Schools by Edwin R. Gerler, Jr., Canary C. Hogan and Kathleen O'Rourke, Editors

A compilation of articles from journals and ERIC, as well as one original article, on topics of importance to middle school counselors. 386 pp.

Elementary School Counseling in a Changing World by Edwin R. Gerler, Jr., Joseph C. Ciechalski and Larry E. Parker, Editors

This book is a collection of the best articles published in counseling journals during the 1980s as well as original articles, providing elementary specialists with an abundance of eye-opening, innovative approaches and useful information as they seek the surest methods for guiding young students. *398 pp.*

Other Exciting CASS Publications

Family Counseling and Therapy by Robert L. Smith and Patricia Stevens-Smith

Provides an interesting and incisive overview of marriage and family counseling. Six chapters provide extensive coverage of: Healthy Family Functioning; Marriage and Family Counseling Theories; the Practice of Marriage and Family Counseling; Training Marriage and Family Counselors/ Therapists; Issues and Topics in Family Therapy; and The Future—Images and Projections. An exceptional blend of previously printed and original articles by an array of eminent authors. Includes a stimulating introduction by Samuel Gladding. An excellent classroom text or resource for counselor updating. *446 pp.*

CounselorQuest Compiled by Garry R. Walz

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